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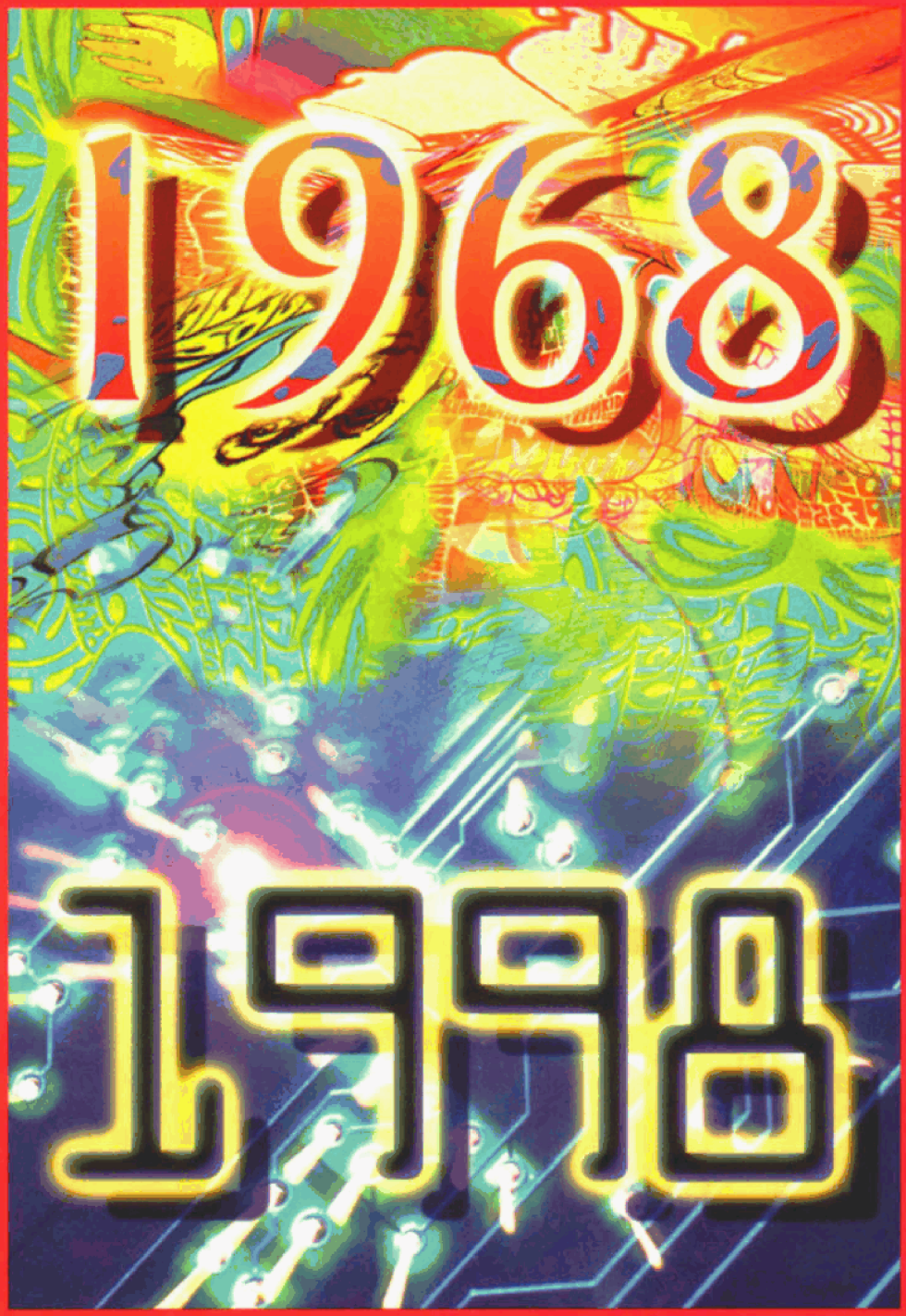

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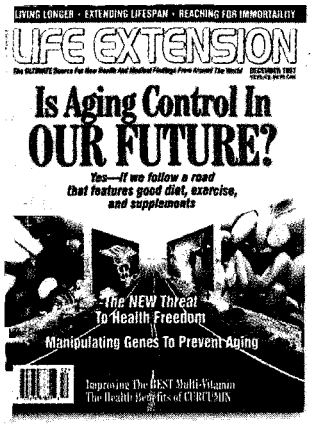
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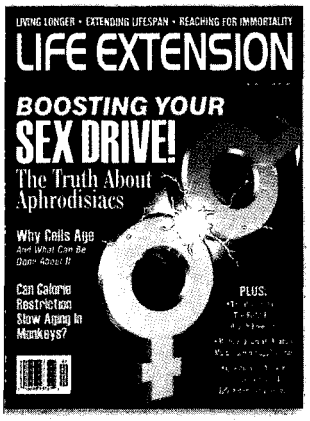
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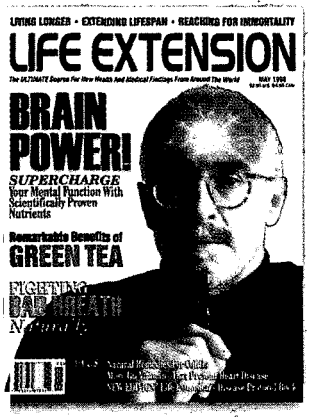
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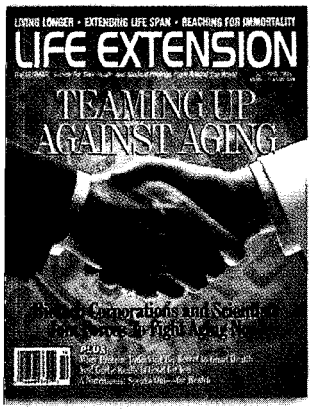

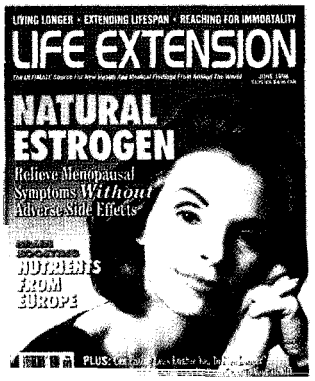
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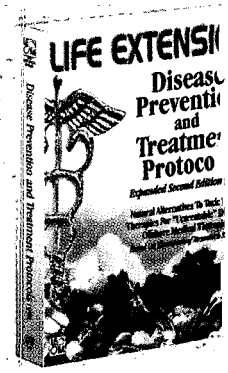

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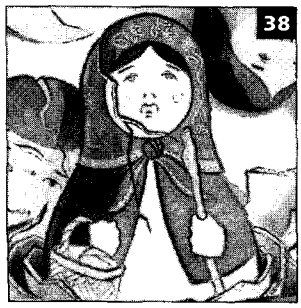

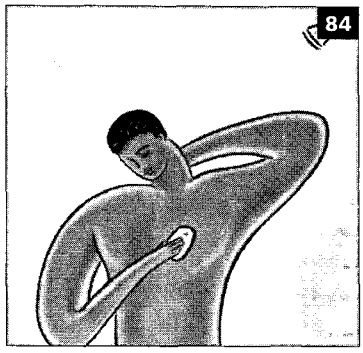

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The Two Faces of Bill Clinton

Is the personal political?

By Virginia Postrel

It has been the year's great mystery: How is it that Bill Clinton is holding at about 60 percent support in public opinion polls—a lot better than he has ever done in a presidential election—while the political establishment sees him as an utter disgrace, a problem that needs to be purged from American political life?

The "utter disgrace" view is by no means confined to Republicans. After the videotape of Clinton's grand jury testimony was released, *The Washington Post* editorialized: "By just about any standard but, apparently, his own, the President pretty plainly lied under oath in a court proceeding and repeatedly in public and private thereafter....Our position continues to be that Congress needs to open a formal impeachment inquiry and decide as that unfolds what course to take."

After Clinton's petulant pseudo-apology speech in August, David Broder, the dean of Washington political reporters, wrote in the *Post* that "in one respect what Clinton has done is every bit as bad as what Richard Nixon did....Instead of owning up and taking 'complete responsibility' as he said Monday night he was finally willing to do, he lied. He not only lied to Paula Jones's lawyers, he lied to the public and to his closest political associates and implicated the leaders of his party and his government in the deception. The selfishness of that act is staggering....[Clinton] acted—and still, even in his supposed mea culpa, acts—as if he does not recognize what it means to be President of the United States."

The general public also knows Clinton lies, and it is none too keen on his sexual shenanigans. Yet those polls remain high, all the better since the release of the videotape that Clinton's partisans fought so hard to keep secret. His *personal* approval ratings have dropped precipitously, but outside the political establishment and die-hard Clinton haters, there is no clamor for his impeachment or resignation. Why such double standards?

The difference lies in whom you see in Bill Clinton: the man, or the president. The public sees the man, a citizen pursued by the power of the state and put in a frightening and humiliating position. Without approving his perjury, ordinary Americans excuse it. They see Clinton's sexual misdeeds as private matters, just as the president and his defenders claim, because they regard sex as inherently private—not an appropriate matter for government prying. They nod when Rep. John Conyers, the ranking Democrat on the Judiciary Committee, opines that "Even worse than an extramarital relationship is the use of federal prosecutors and federal agents to expose an extramarital relationship."

Clinton, in this reading, represents Everyman—not in his actions, which people deem immature, sinful, or sick, but in his relationship to government power. Lawyer-filled Washington forgets how frightening the legal process is to nonlawyers, and how easy it is to get Americans to root for the underdog—even when that underdog is the president of the United States.

The public is right about this much: Bill Clinton the man has indeed become embroiled in a scary and fundamentally unjust process. It is wrong to let prosecutors loose to pursue individuals, rather than crimes, until they find something that sticks. It is also wrong, except in extreme cases, to force people to testify about the intimate details of their private lives. Both practices severely erode the protections citizens expect to enjoy in a free society.

But Washington is also right. Clinton is not just a man. He is president of the United States. As I've noted in an earlier editorial, Clinton the president actively supported the very laws and procedures from which he now demands exemption. (See "License to Grill," April.) In all his appeals for sympathy, the man who cruised into office hailing "the year of the woman" and condemning Clarence Thomas has never suggested that what has happened to him should never happen to another American. He has not even suggested that we dump the independent counsel law. His defense has been completely self-centered; his selfishness is, as Broder notes, "staggering."

For the Washingtonians who must decide his fate, however, the issue isn't whether Clinton the man is a disgusting hypocrite, publicly sanctimonious and privately wicked. It's whether he has abused or undermined his office. As long as Clinton's private activities are truly private, then even perjury to cover them up does not rise to the level of an impeachable offense. The resulting perjury is a personal crime, not a political wrong. The distinction is important because impeachment and removal not only punish the wrongdoer; they rebuke the voters who put him in office. (This does not mean that removing the president would, as his defenders claim, "reverse the election," since the vice president, for whom the same voters cast their ballots, would take office.)

The question before Congress, then, is whether Clinton the man has subverted the powers of Clinton the president to serve his private purposes. And of that high crime he does indeed appear to be guilty.

In what many readers, including me, thought its weakest section, the Starr report suggested one way Clinton has abused his powers: by claiming bogus executive privileges to protect conversations with White House lawyers and other public employees, thereby delaying the grand jury process. Since most people think of "abuse of office" as using presidential powers offensively against citizens, not defensively against prosecutors, the charge didn't appear to stick.

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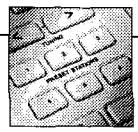

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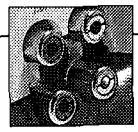

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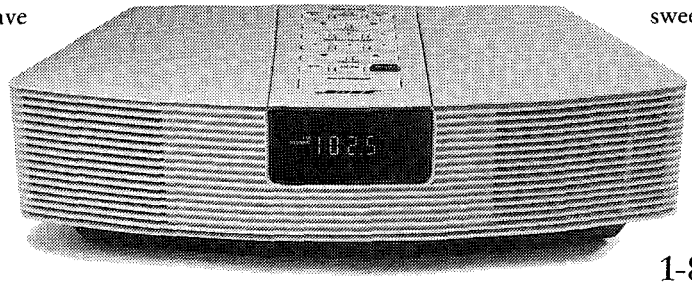

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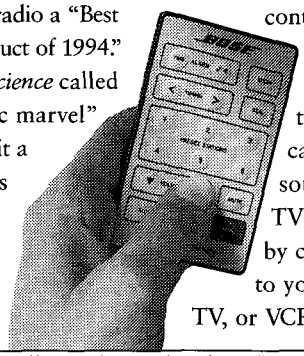

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charge makes perfect sense. The conversations Clinton was trying to protect were, by his own definition, about his private business, not the nation's. Going to court to shield them was a form of deliberate deception—and a tactic not open to ordinary citizens engaged in defending their private affairs. It was an abuse of office.

That abuse is *legally* an impeachable offense—an offense for which Congress might legitimately under the Constitution impeach the president—but it probably is not, by itself, *politically* an impeachable offense. And the political test is crucial: The public must easily understand how the president's alleged wrongdoing violates his office in a grave way. Impeachment cannot bear the taint of partisan charges. The process is supposed to protect the legitimacy of the constitutional regime, not undermine it.

But there is at least some evidence, to which the Judiciary Committee should turn serious attention, that Clinton the president has used more than esoteric legal tactics to serve Clinton the man. The most Nixonian allegations involve using the IRS to harass political enemies, including various conservative think tanks and Billy Dale, the career employee fired from the White House Travel Office; illegally leaking confidential personnel records and FBI files on such figures as Linda Tripp and Republican consultant Ed Rollins; using material from FBI files for personal political purposes; and maintaining a "secret police" of private detectives and others to bribe, threaten, or intimidate people who might talk negatively to the grand jury or the press about Clinton's actions.

The first three allegations directly involve the misuse of presidential power; the third involves it indirectly, both as an extra measure of intimidation and a fund-raising mechanism (none of these people appears to be paid from the Clintons' personal checking account). And running a witness-intimidation squad on behalf of the president, whatever the funding, undermines the rule of law far more than even repeated acts of perjury. It smacks of absolutism and tyranny. There may be legitimate, disinterested reasons behind some of these actions—some tax-exempt organizations do skate awfully close to the IRS line—but the charges are serious, and they bear examination in a public forum.

Finally, the Judiciary Committee, and perhaps other committees in Congress, should look into the gravest allegation against Bill Clinton: that he engaged the nation in war to save his political hide, deliberately excluding from the process knowledgeable officials who might challenge the information on which that action was sold.

Wag the Dog concerned a "war" faked with special effects. The attacks in Afghanistan and Sudan were real. If the president directed the armed forces to fire on foreign targets primarily to distract the public and press from his scandal, knowing full well that conservative Republicans in Congress would reflexively defer to the commander-in-chief, he has come perilously close to treason. That, we know from the plain text of the Constitution, is indeed a "high crime."

Bombs Away

Troubling questions about the U.S. attack on Sudan

By Nick Gillespie

Perhaps the most widely voiced criticism of the ongoing presidential peep show—now playing as a nonstop congressional impeachment inquiry—is that, by focusing all of America's political and media interest on Bill Clinton's arguably private matters, we are failing to pay attention to "more important" issues of the day. Because it is Clinton supporters who typically voice this argument, there is little appreciation for just how much the president may be benefiting from the fact that the public's gaze is firmly fixed on all the curves and contours of l'affaire Lewinsky.

Consider, for instance, the relative lack

of scrutiny accorded the August 20 cruise missile attacks on Afghanistan and Sudan that President Clinton ordered in retaliation for earlier bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa. The specific locations—a "terrorist university" in Afghanistan and Al Shifa Pharmaceuticals Industries plant in Sudan—were chosen because of links to Osama bin Laden, the Saudi Arabian terrorist widely believed to have masterminded the embassy bombings. However, despite the president's assurances that the two sites were attacked "because of the imminent threat they presented to our national security," subsequent reports suggest a pattern of official obfuscation that calls to mind Clinton's cagey grand jury testimony.

While there is broad agreement that the Afghan camp was a training facility for terrorists and had direct ties to bin Laden, there is very little consensus regarding what the Shifa plant did or did not produce. (Whether either posed an "imminent threat to our national security," necessitating immediate action, is another question.)

"Our forces...attacked a factory in Sudan associated with the bin Laden network. The factory was involved in the production of materials for chemical weapons," explained the president matter-of-factly after the bombing, which injured at least 10 people. Administration officials claimed that a soil sample taken by the Central Intelligence Agency from outside the plant revealed traces of EMPTA, a chemical they said could be used only in the production of VX nerve gas.

But reports from other sources—including some in the American intelligence community—quickly undercut such seeming certitude. A number of publications reported that the German ambassador to Sudan, who had a working knowledge of the plant, challenged the Clinton administration's assertions. Similarly, administration depictions of the factory as secretive and highly guarded turned out to be inaccurate. The *Los Angeles Times* cited experts who said not only that EMPTA has multiple uses but that apparent traces could have come from a number of other sources. British newspapers such as the *London Observer* reported that the factory lacked airlocks and other chambers necessary for producing chemical weapons.

The administration's own actions and admissions raise even more disturbing questions. Despite the Sudanese government's call for an international inquiry—and its insistence that the factory produced about 50 percent of the country's legitimate drugs—the Clinton administration has refused to allow an independent test of the CIA soil sample. U.S. officials have conceded that despite claims to good intelligence on the factory, they did not even know who owned it until after the bombing. (They now claim that the owner, Salih Idris, a Sudanese expatriate living in Saudi Arabia, has links to bin Laden; Idris denies any connection.)

In fact, CIA information on Sudan has been suspect since at least 1996, when the United States closed its embassy there (the CIA had shut down its own station there a year earlier). In January 1996, the CIA withdrew 100 intelligence reports on the country after determining that they contained largely fabricated information. The Pentagon is reportedly beginning an inquiry into how the factory came to be a target for U.S. military action.

Additionally, *The New York Times* has quoted unnamed Clinton administration officials who seriously question the operation. "As an American citizen, I am not convinced of the evidence," said one. "The decision to target Al Shifa continues a tradition of operating on inadequate intelligence about Sudan," said another. In a recent *New Yorker* article on the matter, investigative journalist Seymour Hersh writes that Attorney General Janet Reno pushed to delay the bombings until the FBI, the agency responsible for investigating the African embassy bombings, could vet the administration's evidence.

None of this, of course, catches the Clinton administration in a blatant lie, even if it does feed a *Wag the Dog*–inspired skepticism toward official pronouncements on the matter (immediately after the bombing, polls showed that close to half of all Americans thought the missile strikes were meant to divert attention from the president's sex life). But all this information does raise troubling questions—questions that are going largely unasked and unanswered, both in the corridors of power and in the court of public opinion.

The disturbing lack of clarity surrounding the Sudanese bombing suggests something else as well: If and when the public's and the media's attention shifts from the president's sex life to wider-ranging inquiries about how he makes deadly serious policy decisions, his problems may be far from over.

REASON NEWS

■ REASON welcomes Mariel Garza as our new assistant managing editor, charged with keeping our production on track despite an editorial staff scattered across the continent. Mariel, who will also write for REASON, has covered local government for several Southern California newspapers and worked as an editor for health care trade magazines.

■ We're pleased to announce the publication of Editor Virginia Postrel's book, *The Future and Its Enemies: The Growing Conflict Over Creativity, Enterprise, and Progress* (The Free Press). For more information on the book, including an interview with Virginia and an up-to-the-minute list of her book-tour appearances, see our Web site at www.futureand. com.

■ REASON subscribers will receive an end-of-the-year letter requesting financial support. Unlike many other magazines of ideas, REASON has no single patron. We depend on readers' support to continue and expand our activities. Please give generously.

Problems with Plenitude

The concept of plenitude presented by Grant McCracken is intriguing and might be politically useful for libertarians ("The Politics of Plenitude," August/September). But his model would be more accurate if he would elucidate the independent concept of *eclecticism.* Diversification of culture by speciation of subcultures leads to development of their own orthodoxies, to which McCracken alludes in his description of George Wolfe's conflict between his blackness and his gayness. This tendency contradicts the idea that "plenitude embraces those who would otherwise be persecuted for their differences."

"Everyone must necessarily belong to many groups" is a statement of eclecticism. It is the eclectic *individual,* not the process of plenitude, which "resists conformity, orthodoxy, conventions, and rules." Within this descriptive framework, plenitude and eclecticism must necessarily be different, though related, concepts. The degree of subcultural speciation within a society is conceptually independent of the degree to which individuals traverse those subcultures. McCracken's "identity politics" is a corollary to this, as identity is perhaps the underlying eclectic variable. "I enjoy the Grateful Dead" and "I am a Deadhead" imply different points on the eclectic axis.

In many cultural conflicts, identity is implicit in the formulation of the problem. One must either "be" black or white, for example. Awareness of identity and the eclectic axis allows us to see the difference between "You are black" and "You have black skin." I have blue eyes, but I do not identify myself as "a blue-eye." And I am not sure which end of an egg I normally open first.

Jack Simanonok
New Orleans, LA

In his article justifying if not indeed praising plenitude, Grant McCracken clearly believes that the right needs more guidance than the left on the importance of enthusiastically embracing plenitude, by the ratio of 34 to 22 column inches of text. Bias in the media, even in REASON? Amazing!

Or perhaps the right is more upset. If so, let me tell you one important reason why this could be true, which Mr. McCracken fails to mention. It is because many aspects of the various alternate lifestyles, attitudes, or interests thriving under the umbrella of plenitude are not only tolerated by the federal and some state governments (that's fine) but are facilitated and even promoted by them. That is not fine, because anything governments do costs tax money, and the right (call them Republicans) believes with good reason that on a per capita basis it pays more in taxes and takes less out in various forms of government assistance than the left (call them Democrats).

In any event, since relatively few of the new groups or styles spawned by plenitude are perceived by the right as conservative or fiscally responsible, perhaps in part because of the media's tendency to hype the bizarre or shocking among them, the right is not amused. McCracken notes, "plenitude dispenses with permission." It doesn't do much for forgiveness either.

Teck A. Wilson
Osprey, FL

As a libertarian who is also a practitioner of what has come to be known as cultural studies, I was delighted to read "The Politics of Plenitude." But there are two issues I'd like to raise.

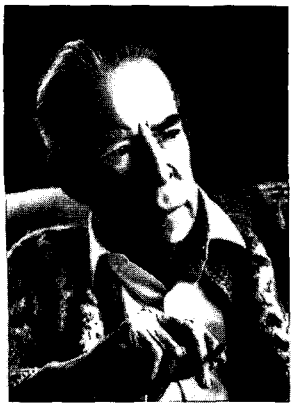
First, I was somewhat puzzled that an article discussing the increasing diversity of social formations seemed to represent the "left" and "right" as homogeneous ideological monoliths. The ideological diversity and fragmentation manifest on the left and the right, respectively, should discourage the practice of representing their views as being uniform. And yet, McCracken does just that. If it had come from a writer less in touch with "plenitude," I'd have written it off as an instance of oversimplification for the purposes of rhetorical economy and effect. But coming from McCracken, it surprised me.

Second, I am curious about the criteria McCracken uses to determine that teen fashion, music lyrics, and the work of Robert Mapplethorpe are "things indifferent," while line dancing is "an interesting and dynamic site for the transformation of gender, class, outlook and...politics." I am not suggesting that all cultural phenomena are significant and worthy of analysis, but the influences of fashion, music, and visual art on people's values, beliefs, and social practices should not be underestimated. For instance, the incorporation of the iconography and ideology of the Nation of Islam by some rap artists in the '80s and early '90s contributed significantly to the cultural conditions that have made the Nation of Islam and Louis Farrakhan a renewed political force in the black community.

Daniel Smith
University Park, PA

It's incomprehensible that you believe that the social decay that has occurred over the past 30 years, referred to as "plenitude," has been a good thing. This plenitude is responsible for the current state of our society, which includes the drive-by shootings mentioned in the article. It is responsible for the increase in drug use, unwanted pregnancies, homelessness, and sexual perversion.

Social decay is evolutionary, and the idea that a single factor will send society over the edge is incorrect. When I was



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young, growing up in the '70s and '80s, I believed my parents were overreacting to the music, clothes, and hair length of my generation. As I mature I see the wisdom of their arguments. Back then, homosexuality was considered deviant. Today it is considered acceptable, but pedophilia is considered deviant. I wonder if your concept of plenitude would hold and even embrace those people who find it natural for them to have sexual relations with young children. Would a society that fails to protect its children in the name of plenitude be acceptable to you? Where does it stop? If people don't need "permission" to behave inappropriately, they will.

I believe a group of people has a right to set the rules for coexisting in a community. If people choose to not live by those rules, they are free to leave that community and start one of their own, not to impose their own rules on the rest of that community. The group has the right to decide how much plentitude it considers acceptable for its community.

Unfettered plenitude is not a good thing. I suppose that the Roman Empire overdosed on plentitude and it killed the society. My fear is that our society is destined to the same fate.

Wesley C. Hand Jr.
wesley.hand@teradyne.com

Grant McCracken replies: I agree entirely with Teck Wilson. Plenitude needs no government encouragement or subsidy, and any such program now in place should be dismantled. The anthropological fact of the matter is that plenitude has extraordinary generative power and can be relied upon to throw off new and more social species without help from anyone. This is, I guess, good news and bad news for the right. Subsidies may be eliminated, but this will do almost nothing to blunt the cultural experimentation we see on every side.

Daniel Smith is right (and characteristically clever) to note a contradiction between writing about plenitude on the one hand and continuing to use the monolithic categories "left" and "right" on the other. This objection was anticipated with cunning footnotes (#252 in *Plenitude 1.0* and #521 in the new version, *Plenitude 2.0*) which observe that this is an unavoidable problem. Until political discourse catches up to the new social dynamism, we have to use the old categories of analysis. *Plenitude 2.0* is, among other things, an invitation for political theorists to construct the language that makes it possible to talk about our new social realities with new agility. (On matters of political theory, I am obliged to admit the limits of my disciplinary competence. More exactly: What do I know? I'm an anthropologist.).

I liked Wesley Hand's observation so much I built it into *Plenitude 2.0* as an illustration of one of the prevailing views of our society, and the very thing that *Plenitude* is designed to address. Before we commit to the unmistakably plausible and tempting notion that the sky is falling, let us be certain we have done our ethnographic homework. What looks like chaos may merely be complexity. Or, as the Santa Fe Institute has endeavored to observe for other purposes: Chaos may not be so chaotic after all.

Plenitude 2.0 is an experiment in plenitude, and I hope readers will feel free to contribute to the discussion of these and other issues at www.cultureby.com, where the book is available for free.

Time Is Money?

I wholeheartedly subscribe to W. Michael Cox and Richard G. Alm's central thesis in "Buying Time" (August/September), but I must quibble with their methodology. Cox and Alm argue that the wonder of capitalism is how many products improve over time while becoming significantly cheaper, to boot. The metric they utilize to substantiate their claim is the concept of work hours. For example, they write that "in 1919, earning enough to buy a three-pound chicken required two hours, 37 minutes of work. Today, it's down to 14 minutes." This analysis, so far as I can tell, compares *pretax* wages at two different points in time. As we all know, the tax on wages has changed dramatically since the turn of the century. To compare pretax wages, then, is to compare apples and oranges.

Even in different countries at the same point in time, the idea holds. Country A's average hourly wage could be $10, while Country B's could be twice that. We would not, from this information, be able to infer that in Country A a worker has to work two hours to buy a $18 shirt, while the Country B worker need work only one hour. After all, if the tax rate on wages is 10 percent in Country A but is 60 percent in Country B, then A need only work two hours to buy the shirt, while B would need to work two and a half. This contradicts the results obtained by looking at pretax wages. Though the disparity in tax rates may not always be that large, the principle holds. Of course, in different times and in different places, other taxes might apply which would also change the metric. The proper way to measure the time needed to purchase a product is to look at after-tax income. Capitalism's wonders are constrained, then, by the increase in wage taxation, and taxation generally, over time.

David M. Primo
Stanford, CA

"Buying Time" was great! Yet it omitted any reference to the costs associated with the provision of government services. Especially informative would be the annual costs associated with running Congress, or the White House, or the federal judiciary. Or the average costs associated with the trial and incarceration of a capital felon. Or the cost per inmate of our state and federal prison systems.

A review of such costs might give clues to why, in the face of your good news about the cost of food, shelter, and life's goodies, we seem to feel neither especially rich nor financially secure.

Albert B. Hall
Friday Harbor, WA

I have worked the building trades since I was 16. I think my case probably parallels those of most tradesmen.

In 1972 I bought a new pickup and paid $2,200 for it. My wife's new sporty red import was less than $2,500. Our "starter" house was a brick three-bedroom, one bath, and cost about $10,000. All of these major purchases were handily covered by the $4.80 per hour I was making driving nails. I don't think I have lived as well since.

Today, a comparable pickup is $22,000 and a similar new home is over $90,000. There is not a carpenter swinging a ham-

mer today who can draw the $48 per hour it would take to make those major purchases with the same 1972 dollars. (It doesn't stop there. The first beer I bought at Luckenbach was 27 cents, plus 2 cents deposit if you took the bottle with you. Today they're $2.50.)

In 1991 I bought a six-year-old "work truck" for $3,750 from a used car dealer. Nothing special, just a plain Jane, low-mileage lease turn-in. Last spring I looked at several 1991 lease turn-ins; the same make, model, and condition as the 1985 model I bought, only six years newer, and they were priced between $12,000 and $13,000. To buy one of those trucks with the same dollars of seven years ago, I would have to be making close to $65 an hour. How much would a house cost if the trades made that kind of money? Perhaps things are better than they were in 1919. Perhaps basic food items and certainly electronics have declined in "real cost" since 1970, but overall, measured in dollars or time, my lifestyle is not as good as it was in 1972.

Hoppy Hopkins
hopstarr@fbg.net

W. Michael Cox and Richard G. Alm reply: David Primo and Albert Hall have their math right. If we used take-home pay, rather than wages, the work time required to purchase today's goods would be higher. Income and payroll taxes are higher than they used to be, rising from 5 percent of wages in the early 1950s to 21 percent today. Comparisons over time, however, are a two-way street. We ignored taxes, but we also omitted fringe benefits. Today's workers take more of their compensation as health insurance, vacation, holidays, retirement plans, and other nonwage income. The extras rose from 19 percent of wages in 1953 to 44 percent today.

Including these benefits would make today's goods and services even cheaper in work time. Data for taxes and benefits aren't available before 1950, a fact that would make long-term comparisons impossible. What's most important, adjustments for benefits would outweigh those for taxes—so we'd find that modern consumers are better off.

It's not entirely clear, moreover, how to adjust for higher taxes. Excluding them altogether would make sense only if public finance were the equivalent of flushing money down the toilet. That's an extreme view. Granted, some government spending may be wasteful, ranging from inefficiently provided at best to worthless at worst. Even so, the public surely benefits at least some from roads, law enforcement, national defense, and other expenditures. Deciding which government spending is worthwhile entails value judgments. It might be a fine exercise in the theory of public finance, but it would obscure the main point of our article. The goal was to show how the competition and innovation fostered by the free-enterprise system drives down the cost of living, allowing consumers to get more for their money.

Hoppy Hopkins's mistake lies in using one person's experience with just two items to suggest that the early 1970s were better for consumers. We never intended for our conclusions to apply to every American and every product. In fact, we singled out two products that cost more: health care and higher education. We suggested that quality improvements account for at least part of the increase in their real prices. Similarly, starter homes and pickup trucks have improved since the early 1970s, justifying higher prices. We have no information on the specific houses and vehicles mentioned in Hopkins's letter. Our analysis uses average wages and the prices of prominent products, with enough examples to suggest that falling real prices is a dominant theme of the American economy. In that context, we stand by our findings. The cost of a Ford car fell from 4,696 hours in 1908 to 1,638 hours in 1955 and 1,365 hours in 1997. The cost of an average new home went from 7.8 hours per square foot in 1920 to 6.5 hours in 1956 and 5.6 hours in 1996.

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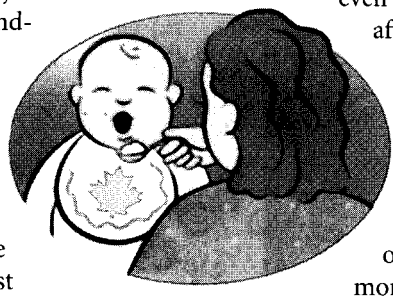
Baby Food Fight

By Jason Brooks

Canadian bureaucrats must have pablum for brains. The federal government has granted a de facto monopoly for jarred baby food, handing all the business to Heinz. As a consequence, prices have skyrocketed.



The strange story began last year, when Heinz (which makes its baby food in Canada) complained to the feds that Gerber was "dumping" baby food, importing it from the United States and selling it for less in Canada than it does in the United States. Gerber sold for as little as 33 cents a jar in Canada, about 10 cents less than Heinz.

In May of this year, a federal tribunal sided with Heinz and ordered Gerber to raise its prices 60 percent. Gerber says it can't compete at the new prices and—after 49 years of selling baby food north of the border—has abandoned the Canadian market.

Now that consumer groups are outraged, the tribunal has said, in effect, "Oops." It didn't mean to throw Gerber out entirely. The tribunal held hearings in September to reconsider its decision and will report its findings later this fall.

But in a bizarre twist, another branch of the federal government, the Competition Bureau, has requested a North American Free Trade Agreement panel to review the anti-dumping decision. It will be Canada vs. Canada when this panel convenes in January, the first time since the establishment of NAFTA in 1994 that one country has gone to war against itself.

Meanwhile, stoic Canadian shoppers—who have been forced to pay millions of additional dollars for bicycles, sugar, fresh garlic, and even tombstones after recent anti-dumping decisions—will have to collectively fork over millions more if they want to feed their toddlers yummy strained peas and carrots.

Instant Gratification

By Ryan H. Sager

The instant that Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr sent his impeachment report to Congress on September 11, the race was on to get the report before the public. Copies were distributed to legislators, the White House, and members of the press; it was also posted it on the Thomas Web site maintained by the Library of Congress (thomas.loc.gov). Soon after the initial release, however, the private sector took over.

Within hours, hundreds of Web sites—operated by sources as diverse as CNN, Yahoo, Netscape, and REASON—had posted the 453-page document. Hundreds of newspapers put the report on their Web sites and many made excerpts available on old-fashioned newsprint the next day. Some, including *The New York Times, The Washington Post,* the *Los Angeles Times,* and the *Boston Globe,* reprinted the report in its entirety.

The first bound version of the Starr report hit bookstores Monday the 14th, as Prima Publishing's Forum division released a copy of the report and sold it for $9.99. On Tuesday, two other bound versions hit stores. For $10, Public Affairs offered the report, the initial White House rebuttal, and analysis from the staff of *The Washington Post.* Pocket Books offered the cheapest version ($5.99), including the rebuttal and an outline of the history of the Starr investigation by reporter Phil Kuntz of *The Wall Street Journal.*

But if you weren't in a hurry and money was no object, you could get a copy of the Starr report from the Government Printing Office by paying $14 and waiting an unspecified time for delivery by the U.S. Postal Service—unless, of course, you lived within easy driving distance of a GPO bookstore.

Political Prurience

By Michael W. Lynch

The Starr report confronted congressional smut warriors with an inconvenient reality: The prurient is often political.

On September 11, the day Congress released the Starr report, the House Subcommittee on Telecommunications, Trade, and Consumer Protection held a hearing on the "Child Online Protection Act." Otherwise known as the

Balance Sheet

By Rick Henderson

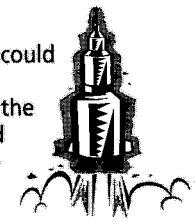
ASSETS

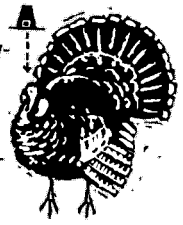
▲ **Duty Freed.** California lightens the burden of jury duty. Gov. Pete Wilson signs a bill to require all courts to adopt "one day, one trial," excusing prospective jurors from service for the next year if they aren't put on a trial their first day.

▲ **Floating Boats.** Say hello to the "mass upper class." The proportion of the U.S. population earning at least $100,000 a year in constant dollars has soared from 3.2 percent in 1967 to 11.8 percent in 1997, says the Census Bureau. It's no zero-sum boom: The share of people below the poverty line continues to fall.

▲ **Universal Access.** More than 100 would-be refugees are locked up in a New Jersey prison, pending their asylum hearings. They claim prison guards have deprived them of sleep, fed them spoiled food, and forced them to help build the prison without compensation. Now a federal district court agrees to let their case against the INS proceed. It could establish the precedent that immigrants seeking asylum have the same basic rights as U.S. citizens.

▲ **Return to Sender.** Private space exploration could be closer. Congress passes a bill allowing private companies to launch reusable vehicles similar to the space shuttle. Until now, the private sector could send only satellites and other nonreturnable objects into space.





▼ **Beltway Turkeys.** Just in time for Thanksgiving, the U.S. Department of Agriculture tells Perdue Farms to remove the "never frozen" label from turkeys that have, well, never been frozen. The feds fear Perdue is tricking consumers by selling turkeys that are processed and shipped at near-freezing temperatures.

▼ **Buck Passing.** With the blessing of Bill Clinton and the Democratic Party, the Federal Election Commission proposes to unilaterally ban unregulated "soft money" from campaigns. The contributions, which underwrite political parties, issue-oriented advertising, and voter registration rather than individual candidates, have long been considered political speech protected by the First Amendment.

▼ **Communication Breakdown.** L.A. school officials who oppose Proposition 227, the June initiative which effectively ended bilingual education, are refusing any formal language instruction to as many as 100,000 non–English-speaking children in the public schools, reports the *Los Angeles Times*. Instead of helping kids learn the alphabet or grammar, administrators say they're teaching oral literacy, or "oracy."

▼ **Green Eyeshades.** Al Gore, Carol Browner, and the administration's green gurus say the Kyoto greenhouse gas treaty will barely nick the average American's pocketbook. Think again. The Energy Information Administration (part of the same executive branch that employs Gore and Browner) predicts that, by 2010, complying with Kyoto will hike gas prices by 53 percent and push down GDP by 4.1 percent.

LIABILITIES

second coming of the Communications Decency Act, the act would make it illegal to sell or transfer via the World Wide Web "material that is harmful to minors." Offenders would face criminal fines of up to $50,000 and six months in club fed, in addition to being liable for civil fines.

The hearing's timing raised an interesting issue: If the "Child Online Protection Act" were already law, would the 363 legislators who voted to release the Starr report on the Web face arraignment in federal court?

No, says Peggy Peterson, spokesperson for Rep. Michael Oxley (R-Ohio), the bill's sponsor. She says the law would apply only to the private sector. And even private Web outlets operated by publishers such as *The Washington Post* and REASON would escape prosecution.

While lurid at times, the report isn't "harmful to minors," according to the three-part test Oxley's bill would establish to judge potentially damaging material. It certainly appeals to one's "prurient interest" and describes "perverted sexual acts"—the first two prongs of the harmful-to-minors test. But no one would argue that the report's contents lack "political...value for minors," the third part of the test.

A similar bill championed by Sen. Dan Coats (R-Ind.) passed the Senate as an amendment to an appropriations bill. The full House passed the Child Online Protection Act by voice vote October 7.

Cyberspace March

By Rick Henderson

Just a few months ago, it seemed as if genuine Social Security reform—including at least a partial privatization of the retirement system—was inevitable. Then came Monicagate.

In an attempt to keep Social Security on legislators' radar screens, and to demonstrate how cyberspace can be used in political advocacy, reformers have launched "The Billion Byte March" (www.march.org), a Web site that allows those who log on to e-mail the White House and members of Congress and demand changes in the Social Security system.

The brainchild of two groups, Economic Security 2000 Action and Third Millennium, the Billion Byte March has also received bipartisan backing in Congress: Its honorary co-chairs are Sens. Bob Kerrey (D-Neb.), Chuck Robb (D-Va.), and Rick Santorum (R-Pa.), and Reps. Jim Kolbe (R-Ariz.), Mark Sanford (R-S.C.), and Charlie Stenholm (D-Texas), each of whom planned to appear at a rally on Capitol Hill in mid-October. The elected officials and the advocacy groups agree on a set of basic principles, which are listed on the Web site, including an insistence that any reforms of Social Security must allow individuals to invest at least a portion of ▶

SOURCES

Spooked by environmental scaremongers? Then download the American Council on Science and Health's **Facts Versus Fears (www.acsh.org/publications/reports/factsfears.html)**. This clearly written, 52-page compendium of case studies documents two dozen heavily hyped but unfounded health panics of the last 38 years, from the cranberry scare of 1959 to the 1989 Alar scare—and how the public is becoming more skeptical of environmental hyperbole.

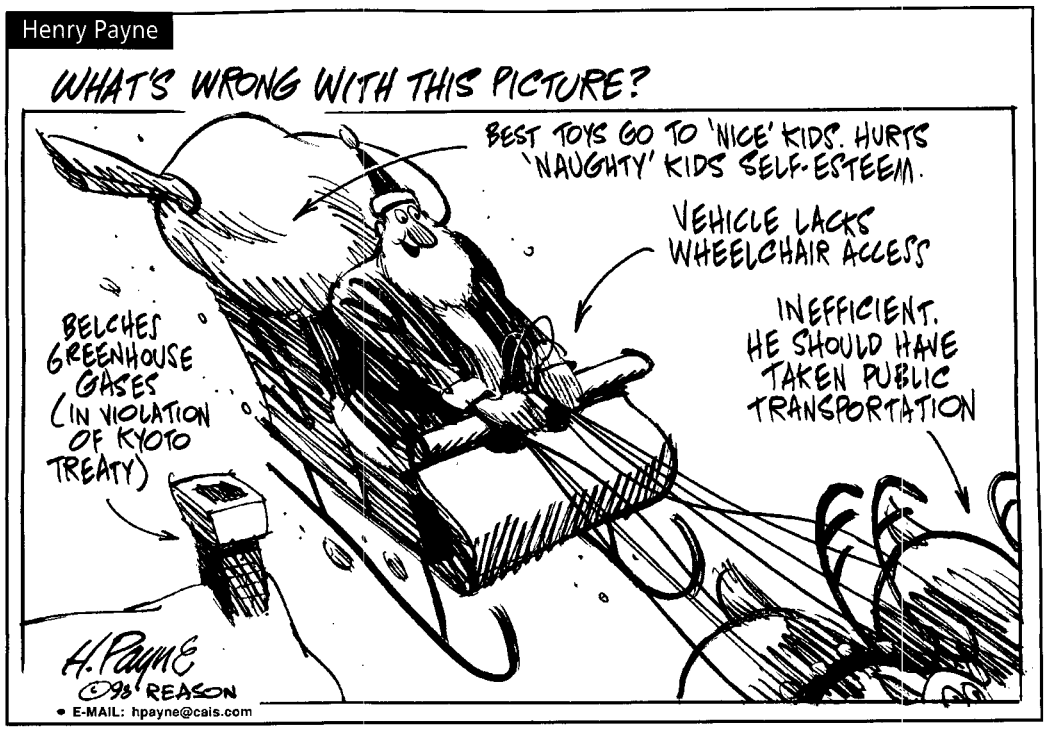
"'Junk science' is bad science used by: personal injury lawyers to shakedown deep pocket businesses; the "food police" and environmental Chicken Littles to fuel wacky social agendas; power-drunk regulators; cutthroat businesses to attack competitors; and slick politicians and overly ambitious scientists to gain personal fame and fortune."
— from the Junk Science Web site **(www.junkscience.com)**, which includes links to dozens of print and online stories (including several by former REASON Science Correspondent Michael Fumento) that take a critical look at how science reporting often distorts basic facts and findings.

BRICKBATS

◆ Michael Anthony Horne tried to convince police that the powder they found in a container in his truck was the ashes of his cremated grandmother. But they didn't believe him, and when the powder tested positive for methamphetamine, they arrested him. Later tests proved that the powder was indeed human remains, but that was too late for Horne, who spent a month in a San Antonio jail. By the time he was released, he'd lost his job, his pickup, his apartment, and his military reserve status. He also lost his grandma. Repeated testing of the powder destroyed most of her remains.

◆ You've heard about people who get upset because their neighbors don't take care of their yards. In Charlotte, North Carolina, some people are upset because Mike Perkins cares too much for his lawn. In fact, the homeowners association in Pullengreen has threatened legal action if Perkins doesn't stop cutting his grass. The association hires a landscaping firm to mow all of the yards in the neighborhood. But Perkins feels he does a better job, plus he like to putter around on his riding lawnmower. He has no problem paying his monthly landscape fee; he just wants to do the job himself. Tough luck. "If I didn't like the rules, I'd go somewhere else," said Wilson Haney, a member of the homeowners association board.

Henry Payne


WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?
BEST TOYS GO TO 'NICE' KIDS. HURTS 'NAUGHTY' KIDS SELF-ESTEEM.
VEHICLE LACKS WHEELCHAIR ACCESS
INEFFICIENT. HE SHOULD HAVE TAKEN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
BELCHES GREENHOUSE GASES (IN VIOLATION OF KYOTO TREATY)
H. Payne
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their payroll taxes in private savings accounts.

National Co-Chair Hillary Beard, who is also executive director of Economic Security 2000 Action, says the leaders of the "march" hope to send between 250,000 and 1 million e-mail messages to Congress and the White House on a single day around the time the president delivers the State of the Union address in late January.

Transit Troubles

By Samuel Staley

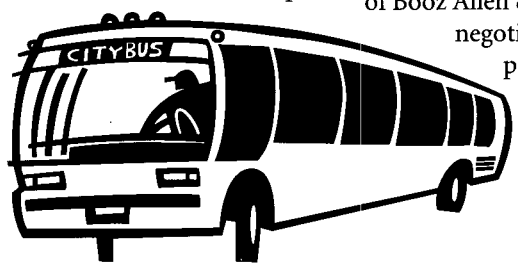
A series of management and modernization failures in the nation's seventh largest public transit system has prompted officials in San Francisco to look to the private sector for help. The San Francisco Municipal Railway, or Muni, has a $281 million budget and 3,441 employees. Yet Muni has experienced a number of failures and much bad publicity in recent months, including:

■ Delays in service and a forced 15 percent reduction in the city's streetcar fleet after a computerized train control system was introduced last August. The problem is not expected to be fixed until 1999.

■ Thirty percent of Muni's diesel buses at the agency's Kirkland facility failed inspection by the California Highway Patrol in June.

■ The National Transportation Safety Board criticized Muni's safety record in the wake of a series of accidents earlier this year.

Mayor Willie Brown and the private management firm of Booz Allen & Hamilton are negotiating a proposal to help restructure key parts of Muni's operations, including maintenance, troubleshooting, and parts acquisition.



Booz Allen & Hamilton has presented its plan to the mayor, Muni director Emilio Cruz, and Board of Supervisors President Barbara Kaufman. Only one-third of Muni's revenue comes from its customers (in the form of fares); more than 40 percent comes from the city's general fund and from parking revenues.

Power Addicts

By Michael W. Lynch

Last April, House Speaker Newt Gingrich proclaimed that the war on drugs had entered a "new, winnable stage." (See "Just Say Newt," Citings, July.) Newt's battle plan included 14 bills and resolutions intended to bolster morale, arm the troops, defend the borders, and take the offensive in foreign lands.

On September 16, the House escalated Newt's war by passing two pieces of anti-drug legislation. By a 396-to-

ARTIFACT

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His Cartesian Way

Frank Sinatra, once a singer, is now a "text." In November, Hofstra University is staging a conference—"Frank Sinatra: The Man, The Music, The Legend"—that proves that what becomes a legend most these days is cultural theory.

In three days of panels, you can hear learned speculation about Sinatra's music ("Hanging on a String of Dreams: Delirium and Discontent in Sinatra's Love Songs"); his presentation of self ("Frank Sinatra's Second Self: The Transformation of His Personality into His Art"); his meaning to America ("Frank Sinatra: An Artist Whose Creative Expression Amplified the Whispers of the American Collective Unconscious"); his meaning to foreigners ("Frank Sinatra and Belgium"); his ethnicity ("I Get No Kick From Assimilation, Or 'My' Frank Sinatra Problem"); his racial significance ("Doing It 'His' Way? Frank Sinatra, Black Music and the Performance of Whiteness"); his style ("Frank Sinatra and the Endgame of Cool"); his imitators ("Dick Haymes: Sinatra Stand-in, Or the Real Thing?"); his philosophical significance ("'All of Me': The Cartesian Soul of Frank Sinatra"); his movies ("Do You Take Sinners Here? How the Films of Frank Sinatra Brought Catholicism Into America's Pop Culture Mainstream"); his politics ("Frank Sinatra and the American Presidency"); even his relationship to architecture ("Playing the Big Room: Frank Sinatra, The Fountainbleau, and the Architecture of Inclusion"). There's much, much more.

"To think," sang Sinatra, "I did all that." Quiet, Frank. You're drowning out the theory.

—Charles Paul Freund

9 vote, it approved the Drug Demand Reduction Act, which would spend nearly $800 million of taxpayer money over the next four years on yet another anti-drug propaganda campaign.

Among other things, this bundle of big-government hubris instructs states to drug-test teens seeking driver's licenses, making test results available to the would-be drivers' insurance companies; asks the secretary of education to develop a drug-free school rating system; creates the Drug-Free National Clearinghouse, which would serve as a one-stop shopping center for anti-drug materials; and encourages states to encourage businesses to adopt anti-drug programs.

To eradicate supply, the House passed the Western Hemisphere Drug Elimination Act by a vote of 384 to 39. This bill authorizes $2.3 billion over the next three years for airplanes, helicopters, ships, a military base, and training academies that would target overseas drug cartels. At press time, both bills were awaiting action in the Senate.

Tellingly, one piece of drug legislation didn't pass this year: a rule to require drug testing for congressional members and staff. If test results were made available to employers, i.e., constituents, we'd finally have an answer to the perennial question: "What are they smoking?"

Trapping Copycats

By Mariel Garza

Jim Robinson describes his Web site (www.freerepublic.com) as a big electronic town hall meeting where members pass around notes and discuss news stories.

But two major news organizations, the *Los Angeles Times* and *The Washington Post*, don't want Free Republic's users passing around any of their articles. In September, the newspapers filed a copyright infringement lawsuit to stop Free Republic from copying and posting stories from the *Times* and the *Post*, a move that could have lasting implications for the reproduction of copyrighted information on the Internet. Robinson, a computer programmer from Fresno, California, says his defense is the First Amendment and the "fair use" doctrine of copyright law, which allows individuals to use copyrighted works within the context of providing commentary.

But it might not be that simple, says David G. Post, a professor at the Temple University School of Law in Philadelphia. The Free Republic copies may well constitute straightforward copyright infringement. A fair use defense can be tricky, Post says, as the courts look at a number of factors, such as how the articles were used and whether they were transformed significantly. The courts also attempt to determine whether reproductions have caused any reduction in the value of the copyright owner's work.

In the lawsuit the newspapers claim that by posting their articles, Free Republic is siphoning potential business ▶

BRICKBATS

◆ Eric Jacoby and Paul Pollock have filed a class action suit against Ogden Entertainment Services, a concessionaire at Philadelphia's Veterans Stadium. The two claim that when they bought beer at a Phillies baseball game Ogden didn't fill their cups to the brim. The suit asks for unspecified damages and an injunction against selling beer in "misadvertised, misrepresented or misleading quantities."

◆ Perhaps there will be a place for Jacoby and Pollock in the American Museum of Tort Law. That's right. Ralph Nader wants to start a museum in Connecticut dedicated to civil lawsuits. Among the exhibits will be Thalidomide, silicone breast implants, and other products that have been the subjects of lawsuits. Nader also wants to install a mock courtroom where mock lawyers will re-enact great product liability lawsuits from the past.

◆ When Congress mandated the V-chip for televisions, it promised broadcasters that sporting events and news programs wouldn't have to be rated and that the chip wouldn't block unrated shows. Well, the second half of that promise appears to have been broken. Manufacturers say that the first sets containing V-chips will allow people to block out unrated programs. So broadcasters will either have to rate news and sports or risk viewers' blocking the shows out of their homes.

Chip Bok

from the newspapers' commercial sites (the *Times* charges users to download reprints). But as any dedicated cybersurfer will know, the Internet is rife with copies of other people's work. So why pick on Free Republic? "It is a little bit odd that the *Post* and the *Times* would be going after a small and insignificant operator like that," Post says.

Whatever the motivation, says Post, any overly broad rulings could have lasting implications for other Internet copyright cases. Particularly at risk may be Web providers such as cybergossip Matt Drudge (www.drudgereport.com), who links his site to wire services and other news outlets. No significant court rulings have dealt with linking.

Eggheads

By Michael W. Lynch

It may have taken seven years, but the Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) will soon require that no egg may be warmer than 45 degrees Fahrenheit from the time it leaves the hen until you place it in a shopping cart. And in case people consider storing eggs on the kitchen counter, in the living room, or under the bed, once the rule becomes final in August 1999, all cartons containing fresh eggs will come with a warning label demanding that consumers keep their eggs refrigerated.

Don't bash bureaucrats for creating such a seemingly silly rule. Congress, egged on by commercial poultry producers, called for the regulation as part of a 1991 egg inspection bill. And even under Republican leadership, Congress has continued its push, threatening to cut $5 million from the FSIS's budget unless it issued the regulations.

Yet there are cracks in the egghead coalition. Hard-boiled food safety advocates maintain that the feds should be more concerned about monitoring the temperature of the yolk rather than the shell; such regulations would necessitate additional testing which, says United Egg Senior Vice President Gene Gregory, would cost 3 cents an egg and could delay the sale of fresh eggs by as much as two weeks. And Jill Snowden, director of the Egg Nutrition Center, an industry group, accuses regulators of overstating the number of egg-related illnesses: For instance, the U.S. Poultry and Egg Association estimates the

typical consumer would have to eat five eggs a week for 77 years before ingesting a single contaminated egg.

Paranoid Report

By Michael W. Lynch

Charges of a right-wing conspiracy again filled the October air in Washington. But this time the claim came not from the first lady but from the National Education Association.

"The Real Story Behind 'Paycheck Protection': The Hidden Link Between Anti-Worker and Anti-Public Education Initiatives: An Anatomy of the Far Right" (www.nea.org/publiced/paycheck) claims to uncover a link between state-based efforts to make union dues voluntary (so-called paycheck protection initiatives) and a national effort to undermine public schooling by a centrally managed right-wing conspiracy. "The conservative network is disciplined, organized and extremely well funded," intones the report. "It has a national reach and management with a local presence."

Despite the hyperbolic tone of its title and introduction, much of the study is little more than a list of various conservative and libertarian public policy and political advocacy groups, taking information about their missions and donors from annual reports and press releases. And it may well become a cult classic among the groups profiled. "It's a great address book for funding sources," says Maureen Blum of the Institute for Justice. Says Claremont Institute President Larry Arnn, "To have the bad opinion of the National Education Association is a badge of honor."

But like all great drama, the report contains plenty of fiction. It incorrectly cites the nonpartisan Reason Foundation (publisher of REASON) as a supporter of Proposition 226, the unsuccessful California initiative that would have required unions to get annual permission for the dues spent on politics; the foundation does not support initiatives or candidates for office and did no research or publishing on the initiative. In an even larger howler, the document cites the National Right to Work Legal Defense and Education Foundation as "supplying the legal muscle for 'paycheck protection.'" One phone call to the group's Virginia headquarters would have dispelled this notion, since National Right to Work took no position on the initiative and indeed sees "paycheck protection" as a potential diversion from the organization's goal of ending compulsory unionism.

Even University of Vir- ▶

DATA

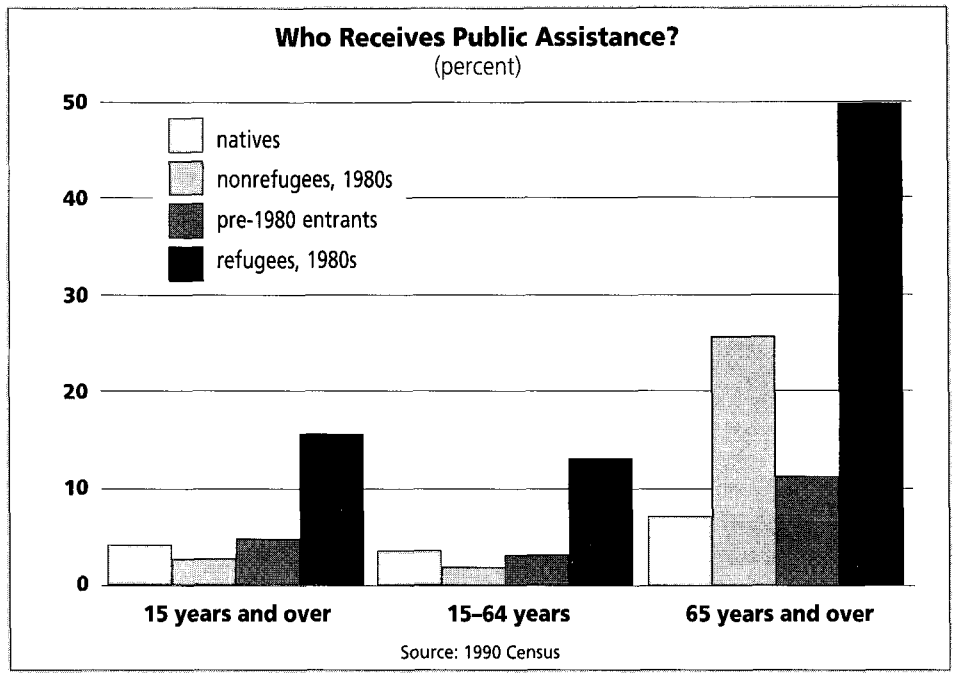
Numbers on America's Newcomers

By Michael W. Lynch

Are immigrants more likely than those born on American soil to live on the dole? It depends, says a July 1998 report published by the National Immigration Forum. Study author Stephen Moore, director of fiscal policy studies at the Cato Institute, found that 5.8 percent of immigrants do wind up on welfare (defined as general assistance; Aid to Families with Dependent Children and its successor program; and Supplementary Security Income), a slightly higher rate than native-born Americans (4.5 percent), according to 1996 Census Bureau data.

But when refugees are sorted out, it appears that America's most recent, self-selected residents come to this country to labor rather than lounge. Census data from 1990 report that only 2 percent of working-age non-refugee immigrants rely on welfare, compared to 3.7 percent of American-born citizens. Refugees, who typically move to this country at times they can't choose, are more dependent on welfare than the native born (13.4 percent). And 11.1 percent of elderly immigrants, who often don't work long enough to qualify for Social Security retirement benefits, receive welfare. Nearly half of elderly refugees rely on government assistance.

Moore concludes, however, that the lifetime fiscal contributions of immigrants are overwhelmingly positive: Depending on education and other skills, the typical immigrant will pay from $20,000 to $80,000 more in taxes than he or she will receive in government benefits.



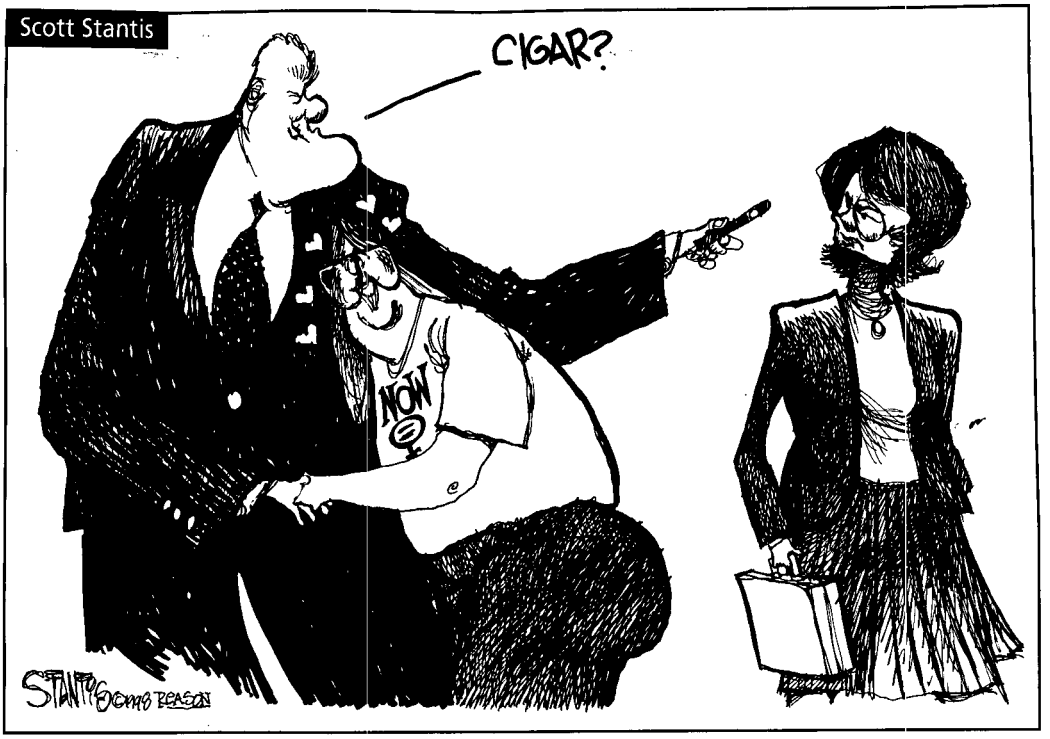
BRICKBATS

◆ You'd think Quebec officials have enough to do trying to stamp out all traces of the evil English language from their province. But they're also busy trying to keep parents from giving their children unusual names, a policy that is typically enforced with little fanfare. Two parents recently ran afoul of the Registrar of Civil Status by naming their daughter Ivory. At first the government refused to allow the name. But the parents hired a lawyer and started a public relations campaign, and the registrar backed down.

◆ In Hong Kong, two democracy activists were convicted of desecrating the Hong Kong and Chinese flags at a rally calling for the end of one-party rule in China. Defacing the flags became illegal when Hong Kong was handed over to China. The judge who convicted the two said the Chinese flag is "a symbol which represents the state, her people and her land" and "should remain as a sacred symbol respected by all Chinese regardless of their social, political or philosophical beliefs." Funny, I could have sworn I heard members of the U.S. House of Representatives saying something very similar a few months ago.

—Charles Oliver

Scott Stantis



ginia political scientist Larry J. Sabato, who wrote the report's foreword, backs away from its conclusions. "People who claim there are conspiracies in the [conservative and libertarian policy community] have never worked with these people," he says.

Numbers Game

By Michael W. Lynch

If you renew your driver's license after 1999, most likely you will find your Social Security number next to your flattering DMV photo. But if you consider this expansive use of the Social Security number a violation of privacy, don't blame your state legislator or the slow-moving DMV employees. Don't even blame federal bureaucrats. The fault lies with Congress, which in 1996 added a provision to an omnibus spending bill requiring states to link Social Security numbers with driver's licenses.

The provision—mandated by that year's immigration bill—is intended to prevent illegal immigrants from securing gainful employment or government assistance. Backers of tougher measures against illegals wanted to make it more difficult to obtain phony IDs and figured that the easiest way to do that was to link driver's licenses, which act as de facto state identity cards, to the federal government's employment and benefit databases. (See "Identity Crisis," December 1997.)

The driver's license would thus become a national ID card. This process came to light in June, when the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) published the following proposed rule in the *Federal Register:* "After October 1, 2000, driver's licenses or identification documents shall contain a social security number." Even if a license isn't emblazoned with the nine-digit number, the law requires state DMVs to collect and verify each applicant's number with the Social Security Administration.

A diverse coalition ranging from the American Civil Liberties Union to Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum lobbied against the regulations. The National Council of State Legislatures accused Congress of overriding states' prerogative to issue whatever types of driver's licenses they prefer. (The NCSL reports that only six states use Social Security numbers as driver's license numbers and that several of those have considered adopting another identifying system.)

Reps. Bob Barr (R-Ga.) and Ron Paul (R-Texas) have introduced bills that would repeal the authorizing law. But with the end of the legislative session nearing, at press time Barr and Paul recognized that the best chance of stopping the regulations was to amend the appropriations bill that will fund NHTSA next year—the same legislative maneuver that caused the controversy initially. ◆

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—James K. Glassman
columnist, *The Washington Post*

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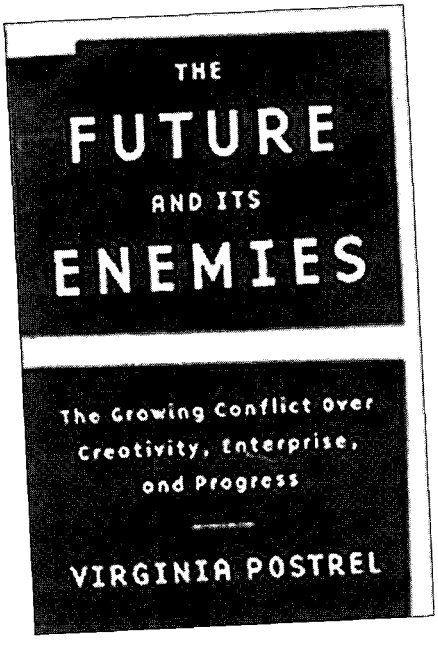

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Theaters of Operation

In which our man in Washington encounters show business, Beltway-style, rides uncomfortably into the sunset, and observes "the work of the American people."

By Michael W. Lynch

Subj: A Day on the Beat
Date: Thu, Sep 17, 1998 7:49 PM EDT
From: mlynch@reasondc.org

Yesterday was a day of policy and political multitasking. It started well for your humble correspondent, with NPR blaring in the bedroom, C-SPAN's *Washington Journal* occupying the living room TV, and *The Washington Post*, *The Washington Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal* on the dining room table. As I read the *Post*'s semi-special scandal section, I thought to myself, "This must be why I went to college." It got even better when my lovely wife delivered a plate of her homemade "apple crumble," a concoction similar to apple pie, topped with vanilla frozen yogurt.

Knowing I had a long day ahead, I also fueled up with some oatmeal before heading out the door to the Heritage Foundation, where the National Immigration Forum and Empower America were sponsoring an event on "A Conservative View of Immigration." Jack Kemp was the day's first speaker. Along with Bill Bennett, he opposed California's Proposition 187, an initiative widely perceived as being anti-immigrant, but whose backers will maintain was only inspired by animus towards illegal immigrants. (This legal vs. illegal immigrant—the former good, the latter bad—is an important distinction for conservatives, as anything that violates a law, be it crossing a border to work or smoking a joint to relieve pain, is to be condemned.)

"This is probably not the most important meeting going on in Washington," said Kemp alluding to a meeting just a few blocks away in which our elected representatives were deciding whether to release Ken Starr's $40 million video titled, *Your President, a Squirmy Liar.*

But Kemp was passionate nevertheless. He has a reputation for going on a bit long. But I can say this about the man: He is a master gesticulator, a skill he has no doubt honed on the campaign trail. He never commits a "mixed gesticulation," which, like its cousin the mixed metaphor (falling through the roof), is when an unpracticed speaker moves her hands up, for example, when saying "Falling through the floor." And Kemp appears to have a signature move. With his arms bent 90 degrees at the elbow and his palms parallel with fingers spread, Kemp rattles off an emphatic point, such as "God bless America," closing one finger with each word, as if to place a staccato over it.

What I always enjoy about Jack Kemp speeches (perhaps because I haven't heard that many) are their eclectic nature and Reaganesque themes. Both were on display yesterday. Kemp referred often to "Ronnie" and his optimistic vision. He spoke of Marian Anderson, the black woman denied an opportunity to sing at Constitution Hall. He quoted Adam Smith. And he managed to devote considerable time to the evils of the International Monetary Fund, not exactly on topic, but interesting nonetheless. I learned, for example, that members of the Ukrainian choir who sang last Sunday at Kemp's church had their life savings drop from $20,000 to 60 cents due to IMF-prompted currency devaluation.

Sen. Spencer Abraham (R-Mich.), the next speaker, started with a laugh line. "I always get nervous if I'm speaking after Jack Kemp and he says, 'I've just got one last point.' "

Abraham, whose grandparents on both sides emigrated from Lebanon, speaks from the heart on this issue. He, too, supports "legal" immigration, knowing firsthand that the best Americans are often found among the self-selected ones. Said Abraham, citing Manhattan Institute statistics, "Compared to native-born Americans, [immigrants] are more likely to have intact families, they are more likely to have college degrees, they are more likely to be working, and they are no more likely to commit crimes." (They are also more likely to dry clean one's clothes, mow one's lawn, or drive one to the airport.)

My next meeting was off the record, so no mention of it here. I emerged at roughly noon and headed back to my office. After checking my voice mail, e-mail, and snail mail, I grabbed my sandwich—turkey on a French roll—and headed to Lafayette Park where it was rumored that a group of concerned Americans were going to be holding a "Wag the Dog" protest rally. This was a "pseudo event," one that exists solely for the purpose of being broadcast on television or affecting a print story, like this one.

Conservatives are concerned that Clinton will veto next year's appropriations bills, shut down the government, and blame the Republicans for it (sound familiar?) in order to take the focus off his "private life." They want the press, and the public, to start thinking along these lines so Clinton, not Congress, will get the blame. Earlier in the day, I had suggested a slogan that I thought might earn some TV time: "Mr. President, just because you spanked the monkey, don't wag the dog."

HENRY PAYNE

Whether anyone used it or not, I don't know, since I arrived a half hour late and missed the entire rally.

I wasn't the only one who arrived late. Kathryn Serkes of the Coalition for the Resignation of the President, a pseudo group, also missed the rally. This was quite unfortunate, as Serkes is a founder of the Presidential Moving Co., a pseudo company, and was hoping to drum up some business by offering an "Impeachment Special"—a free move to any president who resigns. She even had a pseudo contract printed up, offering to move, among other things, "800+ FBI files" and "3 boxes used cigars." She couldn't find parking for her moving van.

I was planning to cap the day by attending an event at the Cato Institute for Clint Bolick's new book, *Transformation*, at 4 p.m. But I was booked to appear on a radio show at 6 p.m. on Monicagate, and I decided it best to study up before opining for an hour on the topic. Not much of note on the radio show, except for one woman caller who reasoned that women weren't upset at the president because they expect men to cheat on their wives and then lie about it. She was fairly certain, however, that her husband wasn't among these men.

Subj: Willie & Me
Date: Fri, Sep 18, 1998 10:58 AM EDT
From: mlynch@reasondc.org

Heading home from the National Press Club yesterday, where the Institute for Justice hosted a splendid luncheon to kick off Clint Bolick's book tour, I noticed a familiar-looking rotund man standing in front of the fence that separates the north side of the White House from the rest of the world. He was wearing a New York Yankees hat, smoking a butt, looking into TV a camera, and surrounded by a small group of people—not an unusual scene, except perhaps the smoking in public, since this is a convenient place for the noncredentialed to film with the White House as a backdrop. But this particular cigarette-puffing correspondent was Michael Moore, whom I know only from the annoying but entertaining film *Roger & Me*, but who I believe has made quite a career out of left-wing gonzo journalism/entertainment. I pulled out my notebook and decided to stick around.

There's a "moving van backed up to the White House," Moore said into the camera, as he told a tale of a Republican coup d'etat. (Indeed there was a moving van parked close to the door, a conventional 10-wheeler cab hooked to a low-bed van. Perhaps someone underbid Kathryn Serkes.) He then launched into a segment that made me wonder if he was on assignment for the online magazine *Salon*. He warned that he was going to investigate the sex lives of all "585 members of Congress." He had to film this segment over, after one of his producers informed him that there are 535 members of Congress.

"You got to hand it to Ken Starr," said Moore, as he started narrating another clip. "Forty million dollars of our tax money to support his sexual perversions. We got to thinking, What about our sexual perversions? Whose going to support ours? Well tonight, on *The Awful Truth*, we are going to appoint our own special prosecutor."

The Awful Truth appears to be an English TV show of Moore's. I made his producers, who soon took notice of my notepad and tape recorder, nervous. Two women queried me on what publication I wrote for. I gave one a card. I queried them on what they were filming. One said a British television show, but wouldn't say much else. I did notice a "United Broadcasting Corp." sticker on a Polaroid camera.

Moore was soon finished filming. As he waddled off across Lafayette Park, his cameraman and one producer stayed behind to film two fellas from Florida reading a poem to the late Princess Diana. Yep, it must be an English show.

Subj: Notes on Montana (very long)
Date: Tue, Sep 29, 1998 2:10 PM EDT
From: mlynch@reasondc.org

Thought I would jot down some observations on my time in America's Last Best Place, a.k.a. Montana. Consider it the truncated diaries of an enviro-capitalist. I know my beat is D.C. and that I don't even scribble much on green issues, except an occasional celebration of ferrets. But like other D.C.–based writers for influential publications, I found myself invited to partake in a journalist seminar on "free market environmentalism," sponsored by the Bozeman-based Political Economy Research Center. This trip is well regarded among inside-the-Beltway scribblers, which was reflected in five of the 15 participants hailing from D.C.

I once heard a prominent conservative writer praise the trip over a Heritage Foundation buffet table. So when I received an invitation to attend, I quickly accepted, after clearing it with the boss.

Filmmaker Michael Moore warned that he was going to investigate the sex lives of all "585 members of Congress." He had to film this segment over, after one of his producers informed him that there are 535 members.

The conference was held at Lone Mountain Ranch, a rustic resort located a wee bit northwest of Yellowstone in Big Sky, Montana. This appears to be a mountain where people express their love for the environment in the free market by building log cabins considerably larger than Honest Abe's. I believe there's a ski resort at the peak of this sliver of paradise, although I never ventured up to confirm. And this is *A River Runs Through It* and *The Horse Whisperer* country (at least I think it is). A stream, or as the locals would say, "crick," runs through the ranch. Some of the best fly fishing in the world is available in the Gallatin River, which runs right past the entrance to Big Sky.

* * *

After the first night's dinner, (I chose French onion soup as my starter, and enjoyed duck for my entree, starting what would be a trend of game-themed dinners. I gained sustenance from bison on Friday and pheasant on Saturday) we played the "trading game." The trading game is designed to prove that trade creates value. For

this particular incarnation, the people at PERC purchased sundry items from Wal-Mart, itself an expression of the free market's influence in rural America, each for less than a dollar. The items were passed out randomly in brown paper bags. We were given pads made of recycled PERC manuscripts and told to value our item on a scale of one to five. Eagerly ripping into my bag, I discovered a miniature bar of Lever soap with a price tag of 50 cents. Not too exciting; but not bereft of utility. I wrote down two.

We were then instructed to examine our tablemates' items, and trade if we so chose. All I can remember is that one person at my table had an old-fashioned black comb. This is national trade, I thought, and I'm stuck in a poorly endowed Third World country. So I immediately started looking to other tables, anticipating that international trade would soon be allowed. I wanted to score some toothpaste, since I could pick up a sliver of soap at any hotel, but a travel-size tube of Crest takes more effort to acquire. But no one would trade with me. I was stuck with my soap—just like Charlie Brown is stuck with his rocks each Halloween.

It was true that the total utility increased with each round of trade (people were asked to write down a new value for each item they managed to bargain for). But I ended up reporting a utility of negative one, feeling psychologically poorer. When asked to explain, I responded that at first I was happy with my bit of soap. But then I saw what others were given, and I wanted them more. So while in an absolute sense I was no worse off after two rounds of trade, in a relative sense I felt poorer, since I couldn't get what I wanted. For this, I was held up before the group, I think by Terry Anderson, the executive director of PERC, as an example of *envy*.

While enjoying an after-dinner drink with a couple of locals, someone came in and announced that the Northern Lights were on display. I finished my pint and exited into the great outdoors with my eyes to the sky. "That's west," someone told me. I then looked north, shivered in my sport coat, and headed off to bed.

* * *

Montana's beauty astounds, its spaces inspire, and, now that it has become a popular destination for the Land Rover set, its food is also quite good. Growing up, I spent a lot of time in the western part of this state. My grandparents on my father's side took a hunting trip to the Treasure State when I was just finishing up grammar school. They liked what they saw, compared it to what California was becoming, and bought what I now know is disparagingly referred to as a "ranchet." My grandparents' ranchet consisted of a few acres with a stream running through in the Bitterroot Valley. They set out to porch-farm alfalfa and porch-ranch llamas. Yes llamas. Sheep were added to the mix as well.

Unwelcome interlopers, I'm told, serve only to produce a "Montana Mirage." The Montana Mirage, as best I could understand it, is the effect of being drawn to Montana's pristine simplicity only to fundamentally alter these characteristics, perhaps even destroy them.

Here in the Gallatin Valley, I discover that characters like my grandparents are seen as problems for the state. They are unwelcome interlopers whose presence serves only to produce a "Montana Mirage." The Montana Mirage, as best I could understand it, is the effect of being drawn to Montana's pristine simplicity only to fundamentally alter these characteristics, perhaps even destroy them.

Although this seemed to be a general feeling among the locals in our group, the Friday morning presentation by Montana rancher John Flynn provided some precision to these inchoate sentiments. Flynn, who is profiled in a book co-authored by Terry Anderson called *Enviro-Capitalists*, is a Montana native who works days as the Broadwater County Attorney. He is also a novelist, having published *Montana Pursuit*, and a lover of Montana's natural emptiness. Flynn also runs a ranch. To stay afloat, Flynn has diversified his activities. His ranch no longer exclusively raises beef. It also provides a hunting refuge, cattle drives for well-heeled Americans and foreigners who pay to do the work of the West, and, believe it or not, a Tom Sawyer product, where these same people actually pay to work on his ranch all day. Not bad. That's exactly the creativity that we expect from Americans.

This would seem to make Flynn an enviro-capitalist, if that word can be parsed to mean a person who is making some dough selling environmental amenities or experiences at the same time he works to conserve them. And at a conference that is celebrating "free market environmentalism," Flynn is a good choice of speaker. But Flynn rejects the label. He is not driven not by either environmentalism or capitalism, although he appears to have an appreciation of both. Rather, he is driven by a deep desire to preserve his form of life, working ranches, which he sees disappearing in Montana under the twin forces of free trade and ranchet-building transplants.

The ranching way of life—living off the land, turning grass into money (the cow, according to Flynn and other ranchers, is just the middle man)—is becoming unsustainable in parts of Montana. A combination of low commodity prices and high demand for scenic rural living, if only for a few months a year, provides ranchers with a sell option that's tough to refuse. An acre of high-mountain range, according to Flynn, can produce an annual beef-based profit of $75 at today's prices. Yet "flatlanders" are eager to buy this land for up to $3,000 an acre. (I know I'm mixing a stock and a flow variable, but this is how he presented it. And he is well positioned to know if there's a spread.)

These newcomers aren't interested in working the land. Most want ranchets—a few prime acres, around which they will build a fence. In doing so they have bid up the price of land so that no working ranch in Montana will ever be able to add another acre, according to Flynn.

Flynn's story is compelling and in his raw genuineness, he pulls one quickly to

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- ***Roberto Salinas*** (Mexico), libertarian economist and vice-president of TV Azteca;
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his side. But it struck me that his story is fundamentally at odds with the free market philosophy that is supposedly celebrated by the day's sponsors. Free markets are about change, the old giving way to the new, today's new becoming tomorrow's old, and the cycle relentlessly churning on. That an acre that will only produce $75 is valued by some at $3,000 is the market's way of telling the rancher to get a new line of work. It's painful and disruptive. It frustrates expectations, forces change, disrupts communities, and many other undesirable things. It is also what has made us a wealthy nation.

* * *

We just had a mini-blowup. It was probably inevitable, given the disparate folks who are assembled. One woman, who to this day remains inspired by Paul Ehrlich's 1968 book *The Population Bomb*, expressed concern that members of our group weren't sufficiently spiritual in their environmentalism. She was so upset after the morning's discussion and its talk of markets that she had to take a two-hour hike to commune with nature just to restore her equilibrium. (Your humble correspondent, if you must know, used this recreation time to sit on the porch and smoke a cigar while typing on my laptop.) But even this proved disconcerting, as she encountered a private property sign on the hike. "I don't see too many signs that say, Please Trespass," she said in an attempt to make some larger point about the downsides of the free market.

After this outburst, a few participants felt the need to articulate their devotion to nature, adding the market is simply a means to the end of environmental bliss. There were complaints about Disneyland and malls. Not covering the environment, I had remained silent, satisfying my needs with a single witticism, but offering no full-throated articulation of my view. But I feel compelled now to go on record.

Environmental amenities—hiking, fishing, looking at trees—are just one of a number of things for which I find the great outdoors useful. Sure, I like to wake up in fresh mountain air. Who wouldn't, so long as a shower is nearby and food not far away? But I also love the smell of diesel fuel, its exhaust once combusted, and the sight of scrapers, front-end loaders, and bulldozers hard at work creating comfort for humans. Give me a backhoe digging deep into the earth. Hand me a chainsaw, I'll clear the trees. While an old tree is something to look at for a few minutes, perhaps photograph my lovely wife beside, what really commands my attention is industrial structures, especially those that have slipped into retirement: old factories and deserted warehouses. I'll trade a tree for an old steam locomotive on which to climb or a rusting truck chassis to examine any day. It's fine to commune with nature, take a walk in the woods, and wallow in the wonderful outdoors. But I also like Brooklyn, where factories are found among apartments and houses, or San Francisco's China Basin, where one can enjoy a Bloody Mary brunch amid working shipyards.

It's fine to commune with nature, take a walk in the woods, and wallow in the wonderful outdoors. But I also like Brooklyn, where factories are found among apartments and houses, or San Francisco's China Basin, where one can enjoy a Bloody Mary brunch amid working shipyards.

Perhaps I'm a little off center. But that's why I don't write much on the environment.

* * *

After a Saturday morning of deep discussion of water markets, it was recreation time. I decided to suck it up, saddle up, and head out on a guided horseback ride. Given my history with horses—I was nearly bucked off on one occasion—I requested the laziest, most even-tempered beast they had. Instead, they gave me the hungriest.

Heading out of the Lone Mountain Ranch, I was bringing up the rear. The tour for everyone else was experienced on a walking horse, head-to-butt, five in a line. I wasn't so lucky. My horse felt the need to stop and eat every few steps, which caused the horse and me to fall behind. The horse, whose name I made it a point not to learn, obliged by trotting to catch up. Trotting is one of those activities that I would rather look at than experience with any frequency or for any duration. For a skilled equestrian, I am sure that it is pleasurable and easy. But for your humble correspondent, it is back-jarring, butt-bouncing and ball-smashing.

This cycle continued for an hour and a half. As the others walked ponderously along, we stopped every time my horse found its mouth empty of grass. I would cuss it and pull on the reins, being instructed that the latter would prevent its grazing. It didn't. After eating its fill, it would trot to catch up to the walking others, only to commence grazing again upon reaching the pack.

As we headed through the hills, I kept longing for a motorcycle.

Subj: Food Supply Report
Date: Fri, Oct 2, 1998 2:16 PM EDT
From: mlynch@ reasondc.org

Headed out this morning to the inaugural meeting of the President's Council on Food Safety. The life of your humble correspondent is not simply a medley of AEI events, discussions in the gym, and horseback rides. Nope. There's the DGS (Dull Government Stuff) as well.

I happened across the announcement for this meeting while reporting on the feds' new egg regulations. The timing caught my eye. On August 25, a mere week and a day after his non-apology apology, our president issued Executive Order 13100 and created The President's Council on Food Safety.

"By the authority invested in me as President...and in order to improve the safety of the food supply through science-based regulation and well-coordinated inspection, enforcement, research and education programs, it is hereby ordered" that a train wreck of high-level bureau-

crats, including the "Secretary of Agriculture, Commerce, Health and Human Services and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency" and many, many, many more get together and discuss food safety.

As I read this, I thought the most powerful politician in the world wasn't kidding on August 17, when he looked us in the eye, blamed Ken Starr for his blow job problems, and said he needed to get back to the work of the American people. Food safety. Important work.

When I arrived and unpacked my laptop about five minutes before the 9:30 a.m. start time, the scene was giddy, as one would expect. It was, after all, a room full of approximately 150 bureaucrats and sundry hangers-on, from advocacy groups to industry representatives, known in bureaucratese as "stakeholders." We were at ground zero of the creation of yet another great effort by government. As I glanced at the name tags with prominent affiliations from all walks of life: FDA, USDA, FSIS, American Frozen Food Institute, Kraft Foods, FMC, etc., I thought, this is what my economics professors meant by "deadweight loss." I finally have human faces to plaster in the shaded triangle.

Dr. Neal Lane, who's the assistant to some bureaucrat who is probably an assistant to another, kicked off the event, enthusing about a "comprehensive food safety plan," and the excitement of "public input," as HHS Secretary Donna Shalala sat stoically in a state of boredom that undermined the importance of the topic at hand.

Your humble correspondent recognizes the importance of food safety. I once spent a painful few days huddled with a mildly hallucinogenic fever in an $8-a-night hotel room near Mexico City's Zocalo due to a bout of amoebic dysentery. Mexico, you see, doesn't have the USDA, at least not for the taco stands that sell five tacos and a Coke for a buck. But it wasn't the tacos that got me. It was a midnight hot dog purchased from an unreliable fellow while I was sampling the area's cantinas with another unreliable fellow. But that's another story.

Still, it's safe to say that I don't value food safety as highly as the next speaker, Donna Shalala, who looks as if she gets plenty of safe food but lacks other ingredients of a healthy life, such as exercise and sunlight. Shalala talked about a "seamless" food safety net. She quoted Will Rogers: "political promises are about as solid as applesauce." But she quickly reassured the audience that the government does, of course, regulate applesauce.

It's safe to say that I don't value food safety as highly as Donna Shalala, who looks as if she gets plenty of safe food but lacks other ingredients of a healthy life, such as exercise and sunlight.

Shalala read her speech at such a brisk uninterested pace I could barely keep up, although I did catch an utterance that would turn out to be a major theme of the day, heck, of the decade: "When it comes to food safety, what we feed our children, good enough is never enough."

Richard Rominger, deputy secretary of agriculture, was up next. Dull beyond description. Shalala and Lane carried on a side conversation as Rominger droned on. Rominger overshot even the upbeat spirit of the day, when he compared Clinton's efforts in food safety to Sosa and McGwire's slugging. The American people might not know the FSIS from the USDA, according to Rominger, but they know that salmonella is a constant threat. Yep, this guy has his finger on America's pulse, I thought to myself as he spoke of E. coli, Upton Sinclair, and microbial standards. He finished at 10, and he and Shalala left.

With the figureheads gone, it was time to get to the business of the day: the council's vision statement. Dr. Lynn Goldman, an assistant to some administrator in the crevice of the EPA that concerns itself with pesticides and other toxic substances, noted that the vision statement, although only 72 words, is packed with many ideas that fit into three themes: safe and affordable food supply; everyone must play a role; and good science.

We then had a reading of the vision statement, which, in case anybody overlooked it in their packet, was printed on a three-by-five–foot card prominently positioned at the front of the room.

"Consumers can be confident that food is safe, healthy, and affordable. We work within a seamless food safety system that uses farm-to-table preventive strategies and integrated research, surveillance, inspection and enforcement. We are vigilant to new and emergent threats and consider the needs of vulnerable populations. We use science- and risk-based approaches along with public/private partnerships. Food is safe because everyone understands and accepts their responsibilities."

Careful readers will notice that the essentials of Clintonian statism are incorporated. The state will vigilantly protect "vulnerable populations," which, in this room of 99.9 percent middle-aged white people, seemed to mean children, the elderly, and ethnic food cooks. More important, food is safe because we accept our responsibility, which, it turns out, is sending money to these folks to hold such meetings.

From here, the meeting degenerated into a discussion of the vision statement. A woman from the National Pork Producers stated that "education" and "technology transfer" should be part of the vision. A lisp-ridden woman from the Center for Science in the Public Interest thought that it should mention public health and someone else from a public health group added that it would be good to add some "chemical concerns" to the statement. A woman from the safe food coalition argued, surprise, for more government money.

As I packed up to leave, the comments-turned-speeches had already begun. A woman—I'm not sure if the same as before—from the Center for Science in the Public Interest was offering a 10-point plan to save the world. As I was exiting the room, a woman from the Humane Society was attempting to link the treatment of animals to food safety.

It's good to know that Clinton is back doing such good work on behalf of the American people. Lucky for him, and his poll numbers, that most don't know what he's doing. ◆

Thirty Years of Interviews

Since its founding in 1968, REASON has interviewed scores of people, ranging from Nobel Prize winners to TV stars, anarchists to statists, friends to foes. What follows is a sampling of the more provocative, memorable, and—on occasion—absurd comments. As a record of the issues and ideas that captivated not just REASON but the times of which it was part, these interviews comprise something like an oral history of the past 30 years. As REASON enters its fourth decade, they also underscore two enduring themes of the magazine: the unpredictability of the future and the need for principles by which such uncharted territory may be navigated. (Many of these interviews are available in full on *Reason Online* at www.reason.com.)

◆ ◆ ◆

October 1971

From "Break Free!," an interview with therapist, author, and Ayn Rand protégé Nathaniel Branden

Reason: What about sex without love?
Nathaniel Branden: What about it?
Reason: Do you approve of that?
Branden: What am I, your mother? Are you asking my permission? Of course there can be sex without love....the question is not: sex with or without love?—but rather: sex with or without personal involvement? Sex without personal involvement, sex between two people who...are not

interested in each other as persons, is degrading to both participants. However, it happens between people who are married all the time.

"The old enemies of capitalism used to denounce it on the grounds of its alleged exploitation of the worker. But today, when the American worker is so well off materially, that argument doesn't carry much weight, not that it ever did. Now the emphasis is shifting; now the talk is all about 'alienation' and how capitalism and technology 'alienate' man from his 'true self.' When that argument wears thin or wears out, they'll come up with something else. But why? What is it they really hate? That's the question. And why do they hate it? That's another good question."

"[Ayn Rand and I] cared for each other very much....There was a good deal between us that was very happy, very rewarding, and fulfilling. It will never come again. Sometimes when I am alone, in spite of everything I know I find myself feeling affection and smiling at her in my thoughts. And then I wonder, at whom am I smiling? Does the person exist? Did she ever exist?"

"I wish that the book [*Who Is Ayn Rand?*] had never been written....I speak for Barbara Branden as well as myself in saying we repudiate that book...Our repudiation applies, primarily, to Barbara Branden's biographical essay on Miss Rand....Too much was left out of that essay....Miss Rand's penchant for extravagant self-compliments. Her fits of temper over trivia. Her obsession with absolute personal loyalty of her friends. Her deadly, eternal moralizing. Her anger and defensiveness when challenged about her ideas. Her bitterness and suspiciousness and resentment. Her idea of encouraging a person to be independent is to tell him, in effect, 'Go and think it over—until you see things my way.'...All of her friends, all of the circle of which I was a member, were in terror of her—and no one would admit it, because to admit it would be to open the door to the wider implications of her behavior."

November 1972

From "Your Money and the Next Devaluation," an interview with Harry Browne, author of How You Can Profit From the Coming Devaluation and How I Found Freedom in an Unfree World

"I believe there will be widespread bank failures eventually. They could occur very suddenly. Even small-scale bank liquidity problems could create a great inconvenience. I think it's valuable to have at least a month's spending money somewhere safe."

April 1973

From "Non-Zoning: The New Approach to Planning," an interview with law professor Bernard Siegan, author of *Land Use Without Zoning*

"The zoning process is a political process. It has no relationship whatever to looking at each land use and making a prudent decision on it, whether it's good for taxes or whether it's not good for taxes—whether it's good legally or good this way—it's a political process. People gather, make compromises and whoever screams the loudest has his way."

June 1973

From "Why I Did It!," an interview with Pentagon Papers whistle-blower Daniel Ellsberg

"To whom did [the Pentagon Papers] convey a great deal of information? To whom were they valuable? Not to foreigners on the whole, or foreign adversaries. Ho Chi Minh did not need a document to know the president misrepresented the very things being said to Ho Chi Minh in negotiations, or the actions the U.S. was taking against North Vietnam....But to credulous Congressmen and many American voters who wanted very much to give the benefit of the doubt to the President, then the existence of documentary evidence made a great deal of difference."

February 1974

From "Libertarian Politics," an interview with Rep. (and later Sen.) Steve Symms (R-Idaho)

Reason: Would you agree...that Watergate may be healthy in the sense that it's healthy to build a basic distrust of bureaucracy and government in Washington?

Steve Symms: Yes...As a practicing Republican...it's not a political plus for me to be a member of Congress in the Republican Party....But it's kind of interesting....I don't have any sympathy for anybody that's involved in it. If they're guilty, I say they got to face the music, and the truth goes a long way in politics. The quicker it comes out the better. I hope that it weakens the Executive Branch of the government, because the Congress has for too long sat down here and handed over the power to the President.

October 1974

From "Straight Talk," an interview with psychiatry critic Thomas Szasz

Reason: You mean you don't believe that heroin is addictive?

Thomas Szasz: Not so fast. It's precisely the word "addiction" that's my quarry. Suppose you give a cigarette to a youngster who has never smoked. He smokes it. Will he enjoy it?

Reason: No.

Szasz: OK. Suppose you give him a martini. His first martini. Will he enjoy that?

Reason: Probably not.

Szasz: Well, I think you can see what I am getting at. Drug use—whatever the drug—is like any habit: it must be learned.

"There's a strong argument to be made that a free society is a fundamentally unstable equilibrium. There's a great deal of basis for believing that a free society is fundamentally unstable—we may regret this but we've got to face up to the facts."

—Milton Friedman, 1974

In my view, drug addiction—that is, the habitual use and craving for a drug—is not something that happens to a person unwittingly, against his will; it's something he does to himself, generally by practicing assiduously how to use—and enjoy—a particular substance. The idea that a single experience with a drug...makes one a "slave" to it, makes one unable to exist without it, is simply not true. It's what I call "pharmacomythology"—in contrast to pharmacology, which has to do with the real chemical effect of drugs.

December 1974

From "An Interview with Milton Friedman," Nobel laureate economist

"There's a strong argument to be made that a free society is a fundamentally unstable equilibrium, in the language of the natural sciences....There's a great deal of basis for believing that a free society is fundamentally unstable—we may regret this but we've got to face up to the facts....How often and for how long have we had free societies? For short periods of time. There was an essentially free society in 5th-century Greece. Was it able to survive? It disappeared. Every other time when there's been a free society, it has tended to disappear."

Reason: It's paradoxical but...you are attributing to the collectivist intellectual a better feeling for the market.

Milton Friedman: Of course. But while there's a bigger market for Fords than there is for American Motors products, there *is* a market for the American Motors products. In the same way, there's a bigger market for collectivist ideology than there is for individualist ideology. The thing that really baffles me is that the fraction of intellectuals who are collectivists is, I think, even larger than would be justified by the market.

February 1975

From "Economics, Politics & Freedom," an interview with Nobel laureate economist F.A. Hayek

"What I expect is that inflation will drive all the Western countries into a planned economy via price controls. Nobody will dare to stop inflation in an ordinary manner because as things are at present, to discontinue inflation will inevitably cause extensive unemployment....People will find they can't live with constantly rising prices and will try to control it by price controls, and that of course is the end of the market system and the end of the free political order. So I think it will be via the attempt to regress the effects of a continued inflation that the free market and free institutions will disappear. It may still take ten years, but it doesn't matter much for me because in ten years I hope I shall be dead."

July 1975

From "Inside Ronald Reagan"

Reason: Do you believe in conscription?

Ronald Reagan: Only in time of war.

Reason: What about the last 10 years?

Reagan: I disagreed with it, and I'll tell you why: I believe Lenin...on that. Lenin said that he would force the capitalist nations to maintain military conscription until the uniform became a symbol of servitude rather than patriotism.

"I believe the very heart and soul of conservatism is libertarianism. I think conservatism is really a misnomer, just as liberalism is a misnomer for the liberals—if we were back in the days of the Revolution, so-called conservatives today would be the Liberals and the liberals would be the Tories. The basis of conservatism is a desire for less government interference or less centralized authority or more individual freedom, and this is a pretty general description also of what libertarianism is. Now, I can't say that I will agree with all the things that the present group who call themselves Libertarians in the sense of a party say..."

October 1975

From "Fighting Censorship for Profit," an interview with *Penthouse* publisher Bob Guccione

Reason: Do you think that the government should have the right to control the price at which you sell a copy of *Penthouse*?

"When you think of all the laws that were thrown at the Chinese and the Jews, it gives you a very heartening sense of the futility of laws. If laws were really effective, neither the Chinese nor the Jews would be prosperous in most countries of the world."

—Thomas Sowell, 1980

Bob Guccione: I don't think that Dick Nixon or Gerald Ford have the right, the intelligence, the know-how or the talent to control anything other than their own bowel movements, and even that is somewhat in doubt.

May 1978

From "Reminiscences & Prognostications," a roundtable featuring "10 Key Libertarian Activists," including Reason Foundation President Robert W. Poole, Cato Institute head Ed Crane, and businessman and philanthropist Charles Koch, discussing "the significance of the movement they helped build."

Ed Crane: The right wing is atrophying for good reason, and if libertarianism is going to succeed as a political movement in this country...we're going to have to attract support from the left....I view that leftward drift of the [libertarian] movement as very helpful."

Charles Koch: We've seen libertarians go into government. We've seen the Milton Friedmans and the Alan Greenspans in government, and they haven't decreased it; they've helped say, "How can this work more efficiently?" which in the end expands government. It is particularly tragic in their case, because they perhaps were very effective when they were out of government. But *in* government, they get co-opted; they become spokesmen for it and emasculate the opposition.

Robert Poole: We should be radical in our principles and clearly state what they are and make as exciting and attractive a case as we can for our libertarian theory and political principles. But we are failing to attract more than a few percent of voters, of average citizens, because of the way we fail to *translate* those principles into specific programs that they can relate to in the present political context....If we use the principles to establish step-at-a-time programs that...show real progress in a direction that is in the self-interest of the individual citizen, we'll get a lot further. We'll be taken seriously as providing an alternative that is real and that's responsible.

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December 1980

From "Reason Interview: Thomas Sowell," economist and social critic

"One of the problems with the market from the standpoint of those who think they are the brightest, the best, and ought to be telling the rest of us groundlings what to do, is that the market allows ordinary people to go out there and make their own decisions. And people who think they have the Truth and the Light don't want that; they want no part of that. It's really what they hate most, I think, about a market system."

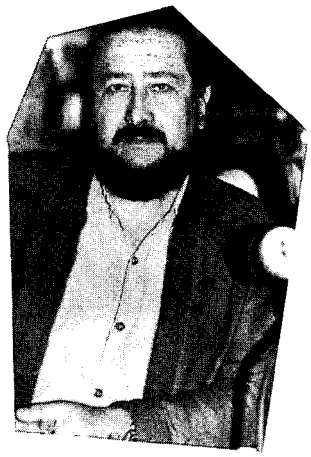
"When you think of all the laws that were thrown in the past at the Chinese, the Japanese, and the Jews, it gives you a very heartening sense of the futility of laws. If laws were really effective, neither the Chinese nor the Jews would be prosperous in most countries of the world. Most of those laws aren't effective. Conversely, most laws designed to *improve* the positions of ethnic groups have not been effective either."

"I'm pessimistic. Because I don't see any easy way that one reverses—I don't see *any* way that one reverses—totalitarianism from within. I don't know of any example where it has ever happened. And if democratic nations can always become totalitarian, but totalitarian nations will not become democratic, then in the long run, ultimately, the whole world will be totalitarian."

September 1981

From "Reason Interview: Murray Weidenbaum," chairman of President Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers

"The capitalist society is very disorderly. The variance is great and may be on the basis of ability, luck, all sorts of happenstance, external circumstances. That upsets people's sense of order. But this is why someone who I think is concerned to find a system that provides more discretion for the individual will put up with all that disorder and unpredictability of results. It's not just that on the average, in an economic sense, you'll do better in a capitalistic society; it's that you have more opportunities for those adjustments as an individual."



"You see, perfectly reasonable people who can tell you that you can never solve domestic problems by throwing money at them, like Reagan, are eager to tell you that you can solve international problems by throwing money at them."

—Karl Hess, 1982

November 1981

From "Reason Interview: Mark S. Fowler," Federal Communications Commission chairman

"Why is it that we now single out one form—over-air television—and imbue it with specific social duties when we don't do the same for film, for example? Why is there this national obsession to tamper with this box of transistors and tubes when we don't do the same for *Time* magazine? Why don't we have a 'fairness doctrine' for *Time* or the *Washington Post*, when we have one *Washington Post* in the city and seven television stations?...The television is just another appliance—it's a toaster with pictures...We've got to look beyond the conventional wisdom that we must somehow regulate *this box*, we must single it out."

May 1982

From "Reason Interview: Karl Hess," anarchist author and former Goldwater speechwriter

"The thing is, people now understand that...welfare programs are bullshit. They've had experience with them. But they have not had experience with a huge military operation for a while. And I believe there is a feeling generally that our humiliation in Iran and various other places was simply due to not spending enough money on the problem. You see, perfectly reasonable people who can tell you that you can never solve domestic problems by throwing money at them, like Reagan, are eager to tell you that you can solve international problems by throwing money at them. At any rate, what they're doing is expanding the power of the federal government, which I think is the whole idea anyway—to expand power because they want an orderly society."

Reason: What is the role of the poor and the minorities in the Reagan years?

Karl Hess: To be poor. That's what their job has always been, and until they understand that this is literally a job, I don't think they have any chance of reversing the situation. Poor people stop being poor when they lose habits, when they stop thinking poor and start creating wealth. This doesn't mean becoming rich; it just means producing wealth, working....The concerns of the poor have never been addressed by anyone. The liberals have simply *said* they were addressing them but kept people poor by putting them on welfare. The Republicans will say, "We're gonna keep you poor, and we won't keep you on welfare." At least that will be the implication. Unfortunately, it won't be the truth. If it were the truth, then we'd have a lot of poor people who would stop being poor.

January 1983

From "Reason Interview: Irving Kristol," neoconservative intellectual and founder of *The Public Interest*

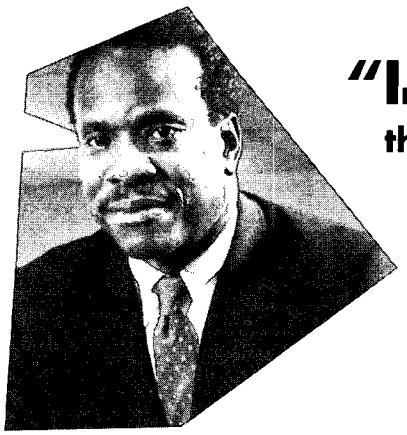
"If you have standards, moral standards, you have to want to make them prevail, and at the very least you have to argue in their favor. Now, show me where libertarians have argued in some comprehensive way for a set of moral standards....I don't think morality can be decided on the private level. I think you need public guidance and public support for a moral consensus. The average person has to know instinctively, without thinking too much about it, how he should raise his children."

January 1984

From "Reason Interview: George Stigler," Nobel laureate economist

Reason: What is capitalism's constituency?...Who's in favor of capitalism?

George Stigler: Oddly enough, aside from Chicago professors of economics, not as many as should be. In the long run, of course, workers and consumers are the main beneficiaries—easier jobs, higher incomes, and so forth. That is the main performance of the system. The businessman can make a killing, but it's a small killing compared to society's killing. Henry Ford made a lot of money making cars at one time, but that was a *small* advantage to him compared to the benefit to millions of people who for the first time in their lives were emancipated from common public carriers and could live where they wanted, move at the hours they wanted, to the places



"In a free society I don't think there would be a need for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to exist. Had we lived up to our Constitution, there would certainly be no need. There would have been no need for manumission, either."

—Clarence Thomas, 1987

they wanted. Ford collected a billion bucks, but that was peanuts compared to the benefits.

December 1984

From "Reason Interview: Henry Hazlitt," journalist and author of *Economics in One Lesson*

"I'm glad that I'm not going to live for many years now, because I see a very dreadful time. Now that we have discovered the atomic bomb, I can't see how we're going to keep somebody from using it, just out of sheer curiosity."

"You can write limits into a constitution, but the question is, is there any way to ensure the preservation of a limited democracy? Even if you have a good system, if the majority has its way, it's sure to lead to bad policy, because the majority doesn't understand limited government."

May 1985

From "Reason Interview: Charles Murray," author of *Losing Ground* and *The Bell Curve*

Reason: The most remarkable thing in all this [the reaction to *Losing Ground*] is that you, to my knowledge, have not been called a racist and you've been taken seriously even by the left.

Charles Murray: I've been very surprised that I have not been called a racist. I expected that, and it has not happened....I think that when change [in welfare policy] comes, it's not going to come as a result of the Reagan administration pushing for it. It's going to come probably because people on the left, with the moral fervor they have brought to almost everything, become attached to what I see as the real problems of the poor.

"There are many whites who pay lip service to programs, pay lip service to values and behaviors and other things in blacks they completely disdain when they appear in whites. We've got to recognize that and ask ourselves, 'White people, just what are we up to?'"

"What do we owe the poor? We owe them a chance, we owe them opportunities that they can make good on, with no guarantees, but most of all with no penalties for success."

November 1987

From "Reason Interview: Clarence Thomas," then chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and now a Supreme Court justice

"When I was asked to go to the Department of Education as well as come [to the EEOC], you're dang right I was insulted. What other reason besides the fact that I was black? But then I had to ask myself, if you don't do it, what are you going to say about these issues in the future? If you had an opportunity to get in there and you didn't do it, what standing do you have to complain? As one friend put it to me, 'Clarence, put up or shut up.' And I wasn't going to shut up [laughs]. There is no way anybody was going to shut me up."

Reason: What were [black college students in the '60s] rejecting?

Clarence Thomas: We rejected a very stable, disciplined environment. An environment with very strict rules, an environment that put a premium on self-help, an environment that did not preach any kind of reliance on government—there was a feeling that you had an obligation to help other people, but it didn't come from your government.

Reason: Why do you think that this agency [the EEOC] should exist in a free society?

Thomas: Well, in a free society I don't think there would be a need for it to exist. Had we lived up to our Constitution, had we lived up to the principles that we espoused, there would certainly be no need. There would have been no need for manumission, either.

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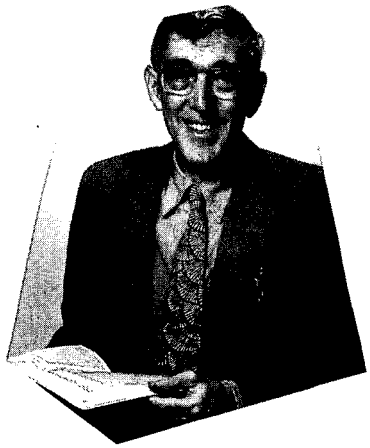
June 1990

From "No Third Way Out," an interview with Czech Republic Finance Minister Vaclav Klaus



"Life expectancy gets longer every year, and it's due to modern science and technology. All these romantics are trying to paint science and technology as the thing that's dooming the world—I just don't believe that. Everything I know says the opposite."

—Bruce Ames, 1991

"*We want a market economy without any adjectives.* Any compromises with that will only fuzzy up the problems we have. To pursue a so-called Third Way is foolish. We had our experience with this in the 1960s when we looked for a socialism with a human face. It did not work, and we must be explicit that we are not aiming for a more efficient version of a system that has failed. The market is indivisible; it cannot be an instrument in the hands of central planners."

July 1990

From "The New Mr. Chips," an interview with Cypress Semiconductor CEO T.J. Rodgers

Reason: The new argument is, "OK, we'll have an industry-led industrial policy. We'll allow the captains of industry to get together and essentially decide how the government money should be allocated." Is that what happened with Sematech [a government-financed consortium of computer-chip manufacturers]?

T.J. Rodgers: Who's the captain of industry? The captain of industry is the guy who's got the best lobbyist in Washington. I'm absolutely sure saving America is the equivalent to saving Intel in [Intel CEO] Andy Grove's mind—and he's a bad guy to pick because he runs a good big company. And I'm quite sure saving America is saving National Semiconductor in [National Semiconductor CEO] Charlie Sporck's mind. It's not at all clear to me that America's better off by using government money to save National Semiconductor.

October 1990

From "Champion of Choice," an interview with Wisconsin state Rep. Polly Williams, the legislator behind Milwaukee's school voucher program

"White liberals feel guilty about blacks, and they do things to convince themselves they are helping blacks. It's feel-good politics, which is really just helping themselves. Poor people becomes the trophies of white social engineers. We have to be saved from our saviors. They have been feeding us pablum for so long, we are finally tired and demand some real meat. We want self-sufficiency, self-determination, and self-reliance, not a hand-out."

"None of the people who oppose my [voucher] plan lack choice in education themselves. They have no idea what the lack of choice in education means, the damage it does when you have to go to an inferior school that will trap you for life."

May 1991

From "Capitalist Tool II," an interview with publisher Steve Forbes

"Growth is like creativity, it doesn't go along very neat, precise plans. You get clogged highways before you figure out a way to open up capacity. You get pollution before you figure out a way to fight it. With automobiles you get accidents, you get carnage. With anything new you have benefits *and* costs. But that doesn't mean you should say, 'Gee, it's bad.' It's much better to have those problems than the problems of stagnation, where nothing happens."

December 1991

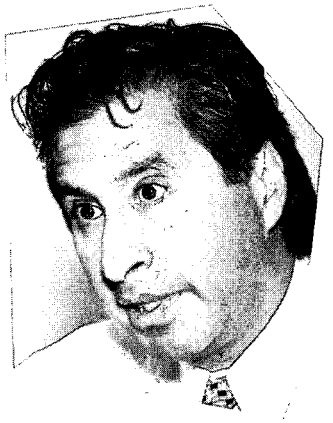
From "Of Mice and Men," an interview with cancer researcher Bruce Ames

"I'm incredibly optimistic because science is growing so fast. There are millions of scientists in the world, and every new rich country needs them and trains them. And everybody's communicating. Life expectancy gets longer every year, and it's going to get even longer, and it's due to modern science and technology. All these romantics are trying to paint science and technology as the thing that's dooming the world—I just don't believe that either. Everything I know says the opposite.

July 1992

From "The Road from Serfdom," an interview with F. A. Hayek (conducted in 1978 and published posthumously)

Reason: Are you optimistic about the future of freedom?



"Maybe you can put America in a suitcase and take it to Hong Kong. And maybe what our Scandinavian ancestors of the 19th century would recognize as America, or as an American city, they would see more clearly in Tijuana now than they would in San Diego."
—Richard Rodriguez, 1994

F.A. Hayek: Yes. A qualified optimism. I think there is an intellectual reversion on the way, and there is a good chance it may come in time before the movement in the opposite direction becomes irreversible. I am more optimistic than I was 20 years ago, when nearly all the leaders of opinion wanted to move in the socialist direction. This has particularly changed in the younger generation. So, if the change comes in time, there still is hope.

February 1994

From "Outlaws and Addresses," an interview with economist Hernando de Soto, author of *The Other Path*

"If you take a walk through the countryside, from Indonesia to Peru, and you walk by field after field—in each field a different dog is going to bark at you. Even dogs know what private property is all about. The only one who does not know it is the government."

April 1994

From "Voodoo and Violence," an interview with magician Penn Jillette

"My mom, who's never seen a *Playboy* and doesn't want to...doesn't understand why people should complain about stuff that costs money that they don't want being out there. She says, 'If you break into my house and open *Screw* magazine and staple it to the wall, I'm going to be angry. Until you do that, I have no problems. I don't want it. I also don't want a microwave. And the only danger I have is that you might buy me one for Christmas. But I tell you I don't want one and we're done. I don't want *Playboy*. I don't want a microwave. Why are these two issues different?'"

July 1994

From "Mind Alteration," an interview with drug policy critic Ethan Nadelmann

"What I most care about is advancing this notion of individual autonomy. When women talk about having control over their own bodies vis-à-vis abortion, they should realize that's one and the same as talking about control over one's own consciousness vis-à-vis drugs. If people want the power to sell their bodies—the same thing. When gays and others talk about sexual privacy, once again it's the same thing. And all these freedoms are not fundamentally different from the freedoms of speech, press, and religion that most Americans now take for granted—but that were once as contentious as the right to control one's body and one's consciousness is now."

August/September 1994

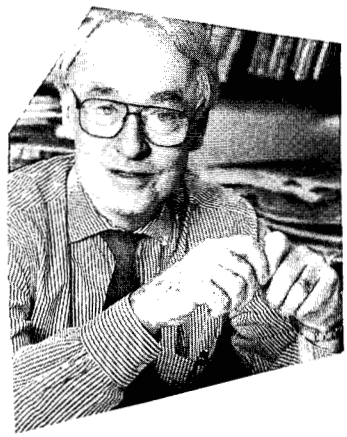
From "The New, New World," an interview with author Richard Rodriguez

"We've always assumed that America somehow belonged on this land. Well, maybe you can put America in a suitcase and take it to Hong Kong. Maybe you can take it to Shanghai. And maybe what our Scandinavian ancestors of the 19th century would recognize as America, or as an American city, they would see more clearly in Tijuana now than they would in San Diego."

"Education is not about self-esteem. Education is demeaning. It should be about teaching you what you don't know, what you yet need to know, how much there is yet to do. Part of the process of education is teaching you that you are related to people who are not you, not your parents—that you are related to black runaway slaves and that you are related to suffragettes in the 19th century and that you are related to Puritans. That you are related to some continuous flow of ideas, some linkage, of which you are the beneficiary, the most recent link. The argument for bilingual education, or for teaching black children their own lingo, assumes that education is about self-esteem. My argument is that education is about teaching children to use the language of other people."

October 1994

From "Life, Liberty, & the ACLU," an interview with Nadine Strossen, president of the American Civil Liberties Union



"Once you emancipate people from strings, once you give them the freedom to prosper, you're going to empower them to do all sorts of things, ranging from the spectacularly good to the heinously bad."

—James Q. Wilson, 1995

Reason: What do you make of the argument, for example, that hate-speech codes represent an attempt to balance guarantees of free speech with guarantees of equal protection?

Nadine Strossen: That is the same argument that's made by folks who seek to restrict what they define as "pornography"—that word is always in quotation marks. It's common to say that we have to choose between freedom of speech or equality, that if you really care about equality you can't possibly be devoted to the First Amendment. I absolutely reject that as a philosophical matter and as a practical matter in the hate-speech context. ...I think it's insulting to women, racial minorities—to anybody—to say that we have to choose between freedom of speech and equal opportunity.

December 1994

From "All I Think Is That It's Stupid," an interview with humorist Dave Barry

"I don't have any insight or understanding on anything about the government. All I think is that it's stupid—which is the one perspective that's almost completely lacking in Washington."

"I felt ashamed at the time to say I didn't want to go [to Vietnam]. I didn't have any stake in that war. I didn't want to get killed; I didn't know anybody over there that I wanted to go over and kill on behalf of....I was really against that war, but to be a [conscientious objector], you had to believe that there was no circumstance under which you would ever kill anybody. And I can't say I honestly felt like that. I would definitely kill people. I would have liked to have killed my draft board at the time."

February 1995

From "No Easy Answers," an interview with political scientist James Q. Wilson

Reason: Is the answer [for increasing government efficiency] to devolve federal government activity to the state and local levels?

James Q. Wilson: I don't think there is much hope for the idea of devolving authority. Once we have sold the idea (which we didn't succeed in selling until 1965) that the federal government is responsible for everything, the idea of state and local control doesn't make political sense....If a radical devolution of powers was possible, it would have been done before.

"Once you emancipate people from strings, once you give them the freedom to prosper, you're going to empower them to do all sorts of things, ranging from the spectacularly good to the heinously bad."

June 1995

From "Best of Both Worlds," an interview with Milton Friedman

"My philosophy is clearly libertarian. However, *libertarian* is not a self-defining term. There are many varieties of libertarians. There's a zero-government libertarian, an anarchist. There's a limited-government libertarianism. They share a lot in terms of their fundamental values. If you trace them to their ultimate roots, they are different. It doesn't matter in practice, because we both want to work in the same direction."

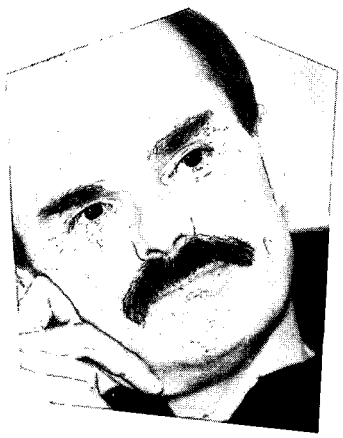
"As I look around me I'm impressed by the fact that there's increasing attention paid to libertarian ideas. If you look at the picture now, compared with 30 years ago, there's no comparison."

"All battles are perpetual. You go back in the literature of economics, and you'll find the same kind of silly statements 100 years ago, 200 years ago. And you'll find the same sensible statements the other way."

August/September 1995

From "Interview with the Vamp," an interview with social commentator Camille Paglia

"I feel that capitalism has a very bad press with the pseudo-leftists who clog our best college campuses and that in point of fact capitalism has produced modern individualism and feminism. Modern capitalism has allowed the birth of the indepen-



"If 70 percent of the public believes nothing the president says—and an even higher number for Congress and the press—that's actually pretty healthy. It means people will think for themselves, and that's the way it should be."

—Dean Koontz, 1996

dent woman who is no longer economically dependent on her husband. I *despise* the sneering that our liberal humanists do about capitalism even while they enjoy all of its pleasures and conveniences. I just despise it."

"The '50s were a wonderful time if you happened to be a blonde WASP cheerleader. Great! But if you were Jewish or gay or a tomboy, like me, or any kind of dissident, it was a very repressive and conformist period....For my generation, the baby boomers, born just after World War II, the '50s were a *horror.*"

March 1996

From "Changing Channels," an interview with C-SPAN's Brian Lamb

"I worked under the assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, Arthur Sylvester, who you might remember was quoted early in the Kennedy administration as saying the government had a right to lie....It was my first education into how news was made, and what motivated correspondents and what motivated the government, how government attempted to shade and cover up and lie, and how the media in some cases would be a willing accomplice."

"The biggest change [in media] is the multiplicity of choice. ...85 percent of the American people have a VCR, 15 percent [subscribe to] an on-line service, and radio's been deregulated. So you have this tremendous choice out there of radio stations to listen to. You've got video games. People no longer get up in the morning and say, "What is the *Today* show doing for me today?" They get up and they really, literally have choice....If you're controlled by the media world, well, then it's your fault and you can't blame the media."

October 1996

From "On the Frontier," an interview with cyberguru Esther Dyson

"Having seen a non-market economy [in Russia], I suddenly understood much better what I liked about a market economy. ...People who produce things and work get rewarded, statistically. You don't get rewarded precisely for your effort, but in Russia you got rewarded for being alive, but not very well rewarded. A worker's paradise is a consumer's hell. People were beaten down. Everybody drank too much. Everything was hostile and dysfunctional. It was a good education about why the U.S. was a better place."

"Change means that what was before wasn't perfect. People want things to be better. They certainly complain all the time about their problems, but at the same time [it's hard] to be told that rules by which they lived, the assumptions on which they based their lives, that these things were wrong—and that's what change implicitly means. When you get a haircut and people say, 'Gee, you look really great,' you always wonder, 'What did I look like before?'"

November 1996

From "Contemplating Evil," an interview with author Dean Koontz

"Every time a poll comes out that shows the public has so little faith in this politician or that party, there's a hue and cry. But I actually find that hugely healthy. If 70 percent of the public believes nothing the president says—and an even higher number for Congress and the press—that's actually pretty healthy. It means people will think for themselves, and that's the way it should be."

January 1997

From "Looking for Results," an interview with Nobel laureate economist Ronald Coase

Reason: You began teaching at the University of Virginia in the late 1950s, and by the early 1960s the administration there was not impressed with the work being done by yourself, Warren Nutter, James Buchanan, Gordon Tullock—four of the most famous and influential economists of the post-war era.

Ronald Coase: They thought the work we were doing was disreputable. They thought of us as right-wing extremists. My

"You would have to be a total idiot not to realize that Alan Greenspan and the head of the Bundesbank are not as powerful as their predecessors were 50 years ago. But what was fundamental were the transactions in the private sector. To a large extent things have never been in control."

—Tom Peters, 1997

wife was at a cocktail party and heard me described as someone to the right of the John Birch Society. There was a great antagonism in the '50s and '60s to anyone who saw any advantage in a market system or in a nonregulated or relatively economically free system.

April 1997

From "Risky Journalism," an interview with ABC's John Stossel

"It was OK to say that regulatory money was being misspent, that less should be spent on Superfund, perhaps, but more must be spent on self-extinguishing cigarettes or fire-proof furniture. [But] to simply say that regulation itself might be damaging to health and the economy was something no respectable journalist should be allowed to do."

June 1997

From "Hints From Eloise," an interview with Eloise Anderson, director of the California Department of Social Services

Reason: You say the goal of welfare should be a minimum wage job. What do you say to defenders of the status quo who say...these are dead-end jobs?

Eloise Anderson: Dead-end jobs. You know, this is a new philosophy. It's a job. If you want to go somewhere else, go somewhere else. We're supposed to be a free people. If that job doesn't take you where you want to go, move to another job. We don't do slavery anymore. So you don't have to stay on that job....Somewhere in the '60s, we started to believe that work was supposed to make us happy. I didn't grow up thinking work was supposed to make us happy. I tell my kids, 'If you want to be happy, be happy at home.' Your home life is supposed to make you happy, not work. If you're lucky, you'll find a job that brings together the vocational and avocational.

October 1997

From "The Peters Principles," an interview with management guru Tom Peters

Reason: There's a great nostalgia now in political circles for the 1950s.

Tom Peters: I have a term that I use in my seminars. I call it the "false-nostalgia-for-shitty-jobs phenomenon": Oh for the halcyon days when I could sit on the 37th floor of the General Motors Tower passing memorandums from the left side of the desk to the right side of the desk for 43 years. It's just total shit. It really is. Life was not as glorious as imagined.

"I think you would have to be a total idiot not to realize that Alan Greenspan and the head of the Bundesbank are not as powerful as their predecessors were 50 years ago. But the major Hayekian, Braudelian point was that government really never could do shit, and what was fundamental were the transactions in the private sector. That was their point—long before the Internet became a part of our life. So to a large extent things have never been in control."

November 1997

From "Stand-Up Guy," an interview with comedian Drew Carey

Reason: What do you like so much about Las Vegas?

Drew Carey: Vegas is everything that's *right* with America. You can do whatever you want, 24 hours a day. They've effectively legalized everything there. You don't *have* to gamble if you don't want to. There's tons of churches in Vegas, too: You'll see a church right next to a casino. But a lot of people like gambling, so they make money off it. Nobody forces you to put money in a machine and pull the handle. But the fact is they *allow* it. Nevada's one of the most conservative states in the Union, but you can do what you want and nobody judges you. And they've got great schools in Vegas (laughs).

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When Property Is Theft

Why Russia's market reform failed—and what to do about it.

By Edwin G. Dolan

Russia's economic collapse in August came as a shock to many in the West. Just a few months before, the reform process—involving billions of International Monetary Fund dollars and countless hours of Harvard consultants' time—seemed to be going well: The bulk of state industry inherited from the Soviet Union had been privatized; inflation had been conquered; the ruble had been stabilized. Any visitor to Moscow could see signs of prosperity: a new superhighway circling the city, construction cranes everywhere, streets crowded with cars and lined with glitzy shops. Certainly there was much more to be done, but reform was widely declared to have reached the gratifying point of *irreversibility.*

By September, all of this had changed. Russia clearly had stumbled on the road to the market. Without the rule of law or secure property rights, privatization had failed to spur investment and growth. Without a functional banking system or a public sector willing to live within its means, monetary austerity alone could not achieve lasting financial stability. And without a respect for social justice based on the right of ordinary people to benefit from the fruits of their own labor, democracy and market reforms became terms of derision everywhere outside Moscow's glittering bubble economy.

For some, the Russian debacle shows that a market economy is not such a good idea after all, at least for Russia. David Johnson, whose electronic newsletter, *Johnson's Russia List,* is the bible of serious Russia watchers, has

BRETT HELQUIST

gone so far as to suggest that the West should apologize for its advice on market reform. The truth is more complex. The lesson to be drawn from Russia is not that markets themselves are a bad idea but, rather, that it is a bad idea to quickly throw up a market facade before laying a firm foundation. Let's take a look at just how the present sad situation came about.

Privatization without Property Rights

Although Russian President Boris Yeltsin and his team did not get everything right, they at least understood that a market must be based on private property. That was progress compared with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika.* The latter was a lineal descendant of the Lange–Lerner socialist market model of the 1930s, under which owners of state firms were supposed to imitate market behavior in response to artificial price signals from a central authority—an idea Ludwig von Mises aptly described as adults playing at markets the way children play at trains. The Yeltsin reforms, by contrast, were to feature the actual transfer of state property into private hands.

That left open the question of who the new owners should be. There was a widely held view that, as far as economics went, state property could be sold or even given away to just about anyone: workers, former Communist Party officials, the Red Directors who actually ran the factories, or even foreign investors. Whatever the details, it was reasoned, the new owners would have an incentive to maximize the value of their property. If they couldn't run it competently, they would best enrich themselves by hiring professional managers or selling to better qualified investors. While some privatized firms would go under, new start-ups would emerge, absorbing workers and resources released by the failures.

But while the question of ownership seemed of secondary importance economically, it was seen as crucial politically. Key Western advisers like Harvard's Andrei Shleifer argued that privatization would never take place unless those who could block it politically were, in effect, bribed with a share of the spoils.

There was a certain amount of good sense in this view, which was grounded, in part, on Margaret Thatcher's successful efforts to spread the fruits of British privatization widely enough to ensure political support. But what music Shleifer's version of the Thatcher doctrine was to the ears of the Communist Party apparatchiks and *komsomol* (Communist Youth League) whiz kids who were in a position to make things happen! With the blessing of Western advisers, they helped themselves to whatever choice morsels of state property were closest to hand. Workers at most plants were given large enough blocks of stock to keep them quiet, but with restrictions on the right to sell and other devices that limited their effective control. Small shops were typically privatized by the people who worked in them.

In a massive public relations effort, millions of privatization vouchers were distributed to the public at large, one for every man, woman, and child. These could be exchanged for stock at auctions of state enterprises. But the vouchers turned out to be worth less than $20 each. Most people either sold them immediately, investing the proceeds in a bottle of vodka or a sack of potatoes, according to their inclinations, or else placed them with fraudulent voucher pyramids masquerading as legitimate mutual funds.

In the end, the shares purchased with vouchers mostly ended up in the hands of the same former *komsomol* wheeler-dealers and Red Directors who benefited from other forms of privatization. Idealistic notions that voucher privatization would lead to a broad-based people's capitalism soon turned to dust.

On its own terms, privatization was a success. In just two years, from early 1992 to early 1994, 104,000 state enterprises were privatized. At the end of this period the private sector accounted for more than 50 percent of GDP and some 60 percent of employment.

Yet the more fundamental goal of a dynamic, prosperous market economy was not achieved. The economic rot that had set in during the last years of *perestroika* continued to spread. Total output drifted downward year after year. By mid-1998, just before the late-summer crash, real GDP had fallen to just 88 percent of its 1994 level, and it is now less than half of the peak it reached during the late Soviet period. Even before the recent crash, 21 percent of the population was living below the pathetically small official subsistence minimum of $70 per month, and tens of millions of workers had not seen a paycheck for months.

Why did privatization fail? In retrospect, the key problem was the failure to establish a system of law within which owners could defend their property and enjoy the gains from increasing its value.

Lawlessness is a multifaceted problem in Russia. It includes the famous "mafias" that engage in widespread racketeering and extortion. Another aspect is a court system that is poorly equipped to render and enforce decisions in routine matters of business law, such as torts, contracts, and shareholder rights. Corruption of government officials, from the local fire department to the cabinet level, is still another part of the problem. Finally, there are whole bureaucracies, above all the tax service, that do not operate according to law in the classical sense of

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Drawing the Line: In the *perestroika* period, the government used strict price controls to limit inflation, a policy that gave rise to long lines and empty stores.

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impersonal, predictable rules on which rational plans can be based. Instead, the bureaucracy acts arbitrarily, ignoring violations of reasonable rules in one case while imposing absurd sanctions in others.

No one of these kinds of lawlessness is unique to Russia. Individual examples can be found anywhere, the United States included. But in Russia, the various manifestations of lawlessness are pervasive, institutionalized, shameless, and subject to perverse interactions to a degree that makes for a uniquely hostile business climate. A couple of examples will give the flavor of the problem.

The first concerns a small business in a provincial city. In 1992, Ekaterina Likhoda, a young woman from Nizhny Taigil, received help in setting up a small shop from the British Institute of Chartered Accountants. Six years later she wrote to *The Times* of London to tell what had come of this well-intentioned effort at people-to-people assistance.

First her shop was bombed when she refused an offer of protection from a local gang. After getting no help from the police, she decided a private protection service was a good idea after all and hired a so-called "sports club" to do the job. When she asked the club to help her resolve a legitimate business dispute, involving the failure of a partner to pay for a consignment, she received no satisfaction, so she rashly hired a competing gang to get rid of the sports club. After this led to a shoot-out, she was beaten nearly to death as punishment for stirring up bad blood between the two organizations. Finally the sports club decided she was too much trouble and, despite a long-term lease, threw her out of the shop in favor of another tenant. In the process she lost everything she owned. She is now unemployed and desperate.

The second example, recently chronicled in *Moscow Times*, shows that even such corporate heavyweights as the oil company Surgutneftegaz are not immune to trouble. In addition to its Siberian production properties, Surgutneftegaz had what it thought to be a controlling stake in Nefto–Kombi, a chain of more than 100 filling stations in St. Petersburg. Sensing that a far-off owner could be outmaneuvered, Nefto–Kombi held a shareholder meeting at which it diluted the parent corporation's control to 11 percent and struck its representatives from the board of directors.

For two years Surgutneftegaz fought the action in St. Petersburg courts, but the courts were friendly to the subsidiary and dragged the suit out on technicalities. Perhaps this had something to do with a deal under which city officials receive cut-rate prices when they fill up at Nefto–Kombi pumps. After two years

of battling, Surgutneftegaz simply walked away from the dispute, cutting its losses.

Circumstances like these sever the essential link between private property and prosperity. Efforts to pursue voluntary exchanges and investment opportunities that move resources from lower- to higher-valued uses have no payoff. At the same time, there are abundant opportunities to enrich one's self at the expense of others, destroying value in the process. Ownership becomes irrelevant; all that matters is having the ability and the nerve to grab someone else's property as it floats by.

Each day's news brings new examples. Suppose you manage a coal mine—why not sell the coal below cost to a friendly intermediary and pocket a generous kickback? Suppose you run a construction company—why use your revenues to pay wages when you can divert them to your Cyprus bank account? Suppose your business is refining aluminum—why pay market rates for your electricity when you can use your political connections to get it below cost?

How's It Hanging?: By 1995, Russia's central bank began to apply orthodox monetarist methods and inflation slowed. But budget and other reforms never took place, leading to fiscal chaos.

Superficially it looks like a market economy: Goods change hands, assembly lines lurch along, freight moves down the rails, but most people get poorer and poorer while only a few grow rich. The mutuality of gains from trade, which not only fuels but justifies the creation of wealth in a true market economy, simply disappears.

Stabilization without Financial Reform

After secure property rights, many people would list sound money in second place on a list of conditions for a prosperous market economy. By early 1998, sound money seemed to have arrived. Inflation dropped below 10 percent a year and Russia launched a new ruble, shorn of three hyperinflationary zeros and confined to a narrow exchange rate corridor at about six rubles to the dollar. Western leaders were quick to herald these achievements and the monetary austerity that produced them. Why is it, then, that "monetarism," as restrictive monetary policy is called in Russia, has become a term of abuse?

The answer is that monetary policy was not supported by structural reforms of the state budget or the banking system. Consequently, instead of lasting stability, disinflation only created the conditions for the financial crash of 1998. It is worth looking at just how this came about.

The recent monetary history of Russia begins in the late *perestroika* period, when the central bank printed vast quantities of money to finance an out-of-control budget, while the government used strict price controls to limit inflation. By the end of 1991, when the Soviet Union fell apart, there were about five times as many rubles in circulation as were needed to finance national income at the low, state-mandated prices. This gave rise to the long lines and empty stores that symbolized the period.

The first major act of economic reform, on January 2, 1992, was to decontrol prices. Given the huge excess money supply, the price level leaped upward, rising by 245 percent in January alone. If no new money had been created, inflation would soon have run out of steam. But when inefficient state industries began screaming that they didn't have enough cash to stay in operation, the reformers lost their nerve. A pro-inflation chairman, Viktor Gerashchenko, was installed as head of the Central Bank of Russia, and an unavoidable one-time jump in the price level turned into sustained hyperinflation.

Gerashchenko stayed in charge of the central bank until October 1994, during which period the annual rate of money growth never dipped below 200 percent. But by early 1995, under the new leadership of Sergei Dubinin, the central bank began to apply orthodox monetarist methods. Inflation steadily slowed.

All this would have been fine had it been accompanied by other policies to reform the state budget and the banking system. Unfortunately, no such reforms took place.

When the disinflation effort began, government expenditures at all levels accounted for more than 40 percent of GDP, a higher figure than in the United States or Japan, and very high indeed

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for a country of Russia's low income level. Tax revenues were over a third of GDP, also high by international standards, but not high enough to prevent a budget deficit of more than 7 percent of GDP. Under Gerashchenko, the central bank had been willing to print enough money to cover the gap, but if headway was to be made against inflation, something else had to be done. There were three options: Cut spending, increase taxes, or borrow.

The right thing would have been to switch temporarily from printing money to borrowing, thereby immediately slowing inflation and creating a window of opportunity to reform government spending and the tax system. Things got under way well enough in 1995, with annual inflation falling below 100 percent for the first time since reform began. But as the months went by, no progress was made on the budget. Military reform stalled. Tax reform stalled. The federal bureaucracy not only failed to shrink but, incredibly, grew to the point where the government of Russia alone employed more bureaucrats than the whole Soviet Union had in 1990. The deficit remained stuck at over 7 percent of GDP.

Borrowing became an addiction. As the market for government securities neared saturation, interest rates soared and debt service became the largest item in the budget. As ever more securities were sold to pay interest on the old ones, an unsustainable debt pyramid accumulated, just waiting for a shock to send it toppling.

Meanwhile, other opportunities for reform were being lost, one of which was the chance to build a sound banking system. In the early days of reform, banking looked like a sector that might lead Russia to a market economy. As soon they were permitted, hundreds of new, private banks sprouted up. It did not take long, however, for the new banks to discover that taking deposits from savers and making loans to businesses was not the quickest way to get rich. A much more lucrative strategy was to attract central bank credits at interest rates well below the rate of inflation, invest the proceeds in hard-currency assets, and pay off the credits later in devalued rubles.

When inflation slowed, that particular banking scam stopped working, but another one took its place. By 1996, Russian government bonds were paying interest rates of up to 100 percent per year, double or triple the inflation rate. Banks became the largest buyers of Russian government debt, still financing some of their purchases with cheap government credits but increasingly also borrowing dollars and German marks on international financial markets.

Such schemes made the banks so rich and powerful that the seven most influential bankers came to be described as "oligarchs," widely perceived to have dominant influence over the Russian government. Unfortunately, along the way, the banks failed to develop into true financial intermediaries. Instead of being used for loans to businesses, all available funds were sucked into the black hole of the government debt market.

The private sector, already hampered by lawlessness and high taxes, was further choked by the high cost of working capital. A large segment of Russian industry was driven out of the monetary economy altogether, into what has been called the "virtual economy"—a system that operates by the use of barter and monetary substitutes. The lack of transparency of barter *deals makes* it easier for firms in the virtual economy to evade taxes, something with which one can sympathize, given how high capriciously enforced taxes are.

Still, massive tax evasion caused the government's debt pyramid to grow faster than ever. Meanwhile, the same kind of shadowy barter deals that managers used to cheat the tax authorities also helped them cheat their own shareholders and workers.

Democracy without Social Justice

The economy that Russia inherited from the Soviet Union was so hypermilitarized and ridden with structural distortions that reform could never have gone smoothly. Mistakes were bound to be made, as they were in such success stories of post-communist transition as Poland, the Czech Republic, or the Baltic states. But mistakes can be corrected and their consequences endured so long as democracy and social justice provide essential popular support for reform—so long as people feel that burdens are equitably shared and that they have a stake in the future.

Russia has acquired the forms of democracy. Elections are held in which opposition candidates are usually allowed to compete, and votes (with only occasional exceptions) are counted accurately. The country has a constitution, although one that is not always observed (except for the clauses that give lopsided power to the president). And it has a parliament, which the executive branch has only once blasted out of its headquarters with tanks. But post-communist Russia has not achieved social justice.

During 1992 and 1993, the price level increased by 24,500 percent. Money that would have bought a retirement cottage in the south for an arctic miner and his family would now buy a winter coat. Money a teacher saved for a coat would now barely buy a pair of shoelaces.

To be sure, not everyone agrees on what social justice is. There is the classical liberal model that emphasizes freedom of economic opportunity and the right of people to enjoy the fruits of their own labor. There is the social democratic model, which seeks social justice through redistributive taxes and transfers.

And there is the model found in several Asian economies in which government help for the poor relies not on transfer payments but on investment in human capital through health care, education, and building rural infrastructure.

This is not the place to argue the relative merits of these models. It is enough to note that examples can be found of countries and periods in which each has worked well enough to produce supportive democratic majorities for predominantly, if not purely, market-oriented economies.

The Soviet Union had its own model of social justice. In return for acquiescing to the political dominance of the Communist Party, people received a low but guaranteed minimum basket of housing, education, and health care plus a poorly paid but secure job and an early retirement. Although by no means egalitarian, the system did to some degree keep the privileges and pleasures of the powerful out of view of the masses. Soviet leaders never dared to subject the model to the test of free elections, but they were largely successful in keeping social peace.

The tragedy of post-communist Russia is that it jettisoned the Soviet model of social justice without adopting any of those common among successful market economies. The demise of social justice came about in three great waves of confiscation.

The first was the hyperinflation of 1992–1993. Under the Soviet system, people were allowed to save, but not to invest. By the time they retired, many people did manage to save significant amounts, but the only saving vehicles were currency or accounts at the state savings bank. Part of the Soviet social contract was that prices would be kept stable, so that when those savings were spent to supplement meager pensions, the money would have the same purchasing power as when it had been set aside.

Russia's reformist government decided not to honor the old social contract. During 1992 and 1993, the price level increased by 24,500 percent. Money that would have bought a retirement cottage in the south for an arctic miner and his family would now buy a winter coat. Money a teacher saved for a coat would now barely buy a pair of shoelaces. Money saved by a pensioner to pay for a decent burial would barely buy a candle to burn in church. For the reformers to have resisted inflation would have annoyed powerful industrial and banking interests. It was easier to let the miners, the teachers, and the pensioners take the hit.

The second great confiscation was a by-product of privatization. In the Soviet system, industry belonged to the people. Of course, they didn't get to vote for their boards of directors or collect dividends, but they were not entirely neglected. The mine or factory where people worked typically provided their housing, schooling, and medical care, as well as such fringes as summer camps for their children.

What to do with all this social infrastructure was a big problem in privatization. Leaving the burden on privatized firms would hamper their chances of surviving in the market. Shifting it to local government would require budgetary resources that just weren't there.

In the end, much of the social infrastructure was simply dumped. No one took the responsibility to fund schools, clinics, and housing adequately. Private schools and insurance never got off the ground except for the small urban middle class. Outside the Moscow ring road, the quality of social services, far below world standards even in the heyday of Soviet power, deteriorated to levels found in sub-Saharan Africa.

Given the cynicism and apathy of the public and the back-to-basics statism of a political elite still headed by alumni of the Soviet Politburo, what does the future hold? Most likely a long period of drift and stagnation, such as Argentina experienced during decades of populist and military governments.

The third great confiscation came during disinflation. As we saw earlier, after the central bank began slowing its printing presses in 1995, the government was not willing to control the budget deficit. As the debt pyramid grew, borrowing from banks and foreign investors became horribly expensive. Casting desperately around for some way to close the budget gap, the government came up with a brilliant new idea: Why not take out a no-interest loan from those same miners, teachers, and pensioners who had so generously financed price liberalization and privatization?

Ask their permission? Don't be silly. Just stop paying them. Between the start of serious disinflation at the end of 1994 and the collapse of the debt pyramid in 1998, payment arrears of the government sector ballooned from less than 2 percent of GDP to over 10 percent. This no-interest borrowing from defenseless citizens totaled a third of all government debt, with payments of wages and pensions running from several months to more than a year late.

Meanwhile, a few people were becoming spectacularly rich. The sight of ostentatious cars, five-story country homes, casinos, and flashy boutiques became as common as the sight of disabled veterans begging on street corners or old men prowling through dumpsters. In comparison with Soviet days, when the privileged party elite bought their caviar in discreet, unmarked special stores and built their country houses on roads closed to public traffic, it was shocking.

Somehow, though, Western boosters of Yeltsin's economic reforms didn't seem to see all of this. For the West, reform became a numbers game. Count the number of privatized firms—never mind if they treat their workers, shareholders, and business partners in a civilized fashion. Count the number of banks and

brokerages—never mind if they're just parts of the great pyramid scam. Watch the inflation rate fall—never mind the unpaid pensions. Count the elections—What? The people have the audacity to elect communists to their parliament? Well, at least be thankful that the parliament has no power and Yeltsin can rule by decree to keep reforms on track.

Back to the Future

If one reviews the advice of Western leaders over the last several years, whether in the carrot-and-stick form of IMF conditionality or the cheerleading of "Boris's friend" Bill Clinton, it comes down to one thing: Keep reforms moving forward. But at some point this became the wrong advice. Russia today is in the position of a baseball slugger who has knocked the ball over the fence but then forgotten to touch first base. The fans are cheering him on toward home, but the coach needs to call him back to correct his mistake. As we have seen, Russia has failed to touch not just one but several essential bases.

The situation is not hopeless, but simply moving forward won't do. If the goal of a market economy is not to be abandoned altogether, it will be necessary to retrace some steps and do some things over again.

Take privatization. Its results have been disappointing because it was carried out before the essential legal framework was in place. In addition, since privatization so blatantly favored the rich and powerful, it poisoned public opinion against the whole idea of private property. It is almost as if someone had set out to prove the truth of the doctrine that "property is theft."

There is no point in urging more privatization until these flaws are corrected. Actually, some parts of the problem have already been fixed. A body of civil law—which didn't exist when reforms began—is now in place. Devices to enforce shareholder rights, such as disclosure rules and transparent registers, have also begun to emerge. Adequately funding these rule-of-law functions of government would help a great deal.

Still, something needs to be done to expropriate the unsavory beneficiaries of past privatization. Ideally, much of this might be accomplished through bankruptcy proceedings. A thorough audit and settlement of claims against firms like Norilsk Nickle or giant carmaker Avtovaz would surely find them insolvent. Their creditors, including unpaid workers, could hardly run them less well than their current owners, who for years have driven them into the ground by diverting revenues and stripping assets.

Unfortunately, bankruptcy procedures are among the least adequately developed branches of the legal infrastructure. That being the case, renationalization, as advocated by Russian leftists, might not be such a terrible idea. That would still leave open the hope of future reprivatization, the next time following fair and transparent procedures.

In the financial area, there seems little sense in urging Russia to stick to orthodox IMF policies of tight money and rigid exchange rates. Those policies do not work in countries that lack budget discipline, a modern tax system, and developed financial institutions. At best they produce brief episodes of illusory stability alternating with episodes of high inflation.

No matter what is done or who is in charge, Russia is unavoidably entering a new episode of inflation. With Viktor Gerashchenko back in charge of the central bank as of September, inflation is certain. Before another attempt is made at macroeconomic stabilization, the microstructure of the financial system needs to be fixed. This will mean downsizing the bureaucracy, radically lowering rates and tightening compliance, and rebuilding the banking system.

As for social justice, it would be presumptuous to dictate a specific formula. But it is clear that Russia is never going to make it as a market-oriented democracy unless its government breaks its centuries-old habit of enriching the ruling class at the expense of ordinary people. A sufficient rule of law to allow people to enjoy their own earnings in reasonable security would be a huge step forward. Where wages and pensions have been promised in return for services to the state, the state should fully honor its commitments just like anyone else. If any money is available and any urge is felt to do something more proactive, the Asian model of public investment in education, health care, and rural infrastructure might do a lot to create a social climate in which market institutions could enjoy public support.

Unfortunately, it is easier to say how to step back and start over with market reform than it is to say who will carry out such a program. It won't be the Gaidars, Chubaises, and Fyodorovs so widely lionized in the West. They had their chance and blew it. It is hardly to be hoped that the job will be done by the new Primakov government, with its economic team of *perestroika* retreads, or by the kind of nationalist-leftist government that the next round of elections will likely bring to power.

What we are much more likely to see is some kind of "mobilization economy." Elements will include inflationary monetary policy to stimulate demand; subsidies to maintain employment in heavy industry; protectionism; capital controls; and, to gain public support, a payout of wages and pensions, possibly with indexation, along with price controls on basic consumer goods. An optimist might hope the package would include expropriation of the bandits who have dominated Russia's pseudo-market economy to date. A realist might laugh at that hope.

Such a policy package just might halt the current downward spiral, although it is hardly a recipe for long-term prosperity. But people in Russia today, exhausted and cheated in their hopes, are hardly looking for prosperity. Indeed, most of them are thinking only of survival.

Given the cynicism and apathy of the public and the back-to-basics statism of a political elite still headed by alumni of the Soviet Politburo, what does the future hold? Most likely a long period of drift and stagnation, such as Argentina experienced during decades of populist and military governments. This is not what the IMF wants, not what the Clinton administration wants, not what the boys at Harvard want, and certainly not what the readers of this magazine would want. But for the moment, it seems to be what the Russians want, and what they are likely to get. ◆

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Yesterday's Tomorrows

1998 marks the 30th anniversary of REASON. In the tumultuous year of our founding, few people would have envisioned the world as it is today. The future has a way of surprising us. Some guides are, however, more prescient than others, and some ways of analyzing trends more promising. For

Books that got the future right—and wrong

this year's Special Book Issue Symposium, we asked a distinguished group of contributors to identify three books on the future—one that accurately identified important factors that made a difference between 1968 and 1998, one that fell flat, and one that appears to best identify the trends shaping the next 30 years—and to explain their choices.

The books did not have to explicitly engage in prediction: Indeed, often the most prescient works are those that identify something about current, or even past, conditions that turns out to be important in shaping the future. Conversely, many a book has been written on a current movement or "crisis" that fizzled.

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Walter Truett Anderson

I don't much like the title of Jean-Marie Guéhenno's *The End of the Nation-State* (University of Minnesota Press, 1995, translated by Victoria Elliott), partly because I don't think the nation-state's end is anywhere on the horizon. Nor, for that matter, do I agree with many of the specific propositions in this quirky, idiosyncratic work. Nevertheless, I think Guéhenno captures the essence of what is and will be going on in the world much better than Samuel Huntington's much-discussed *The Clash of Civilizations*. Guéhenno, who recently served as France's ambassador to the European Union, argues that the kind of world now emerging is in a way more united and at the same time without a center, that fixed and definite territories are becoming largely irrelevant, and that networks are becoming more important than 19th-century institutions of power: "We are entering into the age of open systems, whether at the level of states or enterprises, and the criteria of success are diametrically different from those of the institutional age and its closed systems. The value of an organization is no longer measured by the equilibrium that it attempts to establish between its different parts, or by the clarity of its frontiers, but in the number of openings, or points of articulation that it can organize with everything external to it."

Conversely, there is much in Fritjof Capra's *The Turning Point* (Simon & Schuster, 1982) that I do agree with—his insistence on the importance and value of ecological thinking, feminism, and the human potential movements of the 1960s and '70s—at the same time that I heartily reject his simple pronouncement that all those hold The Answer and are destined to build the civilization of the future. It is a simplistic model of change, and such thinking historically proves not only wrong but dangerous. Capra reveals those dangers in his cheerful willingness to impose New Age agendas on the bad guys with the full power of the state: Nationalize oil, restructure society, do whatever is necessary to get everybody thinking right. In a fairly typical passage of policy recommendations he writes: "An important part of the necessary restructuring of information will be the curtailing and reorganization of advertising....legal restrictions on advertising resource-intensive, wasteful and unhealthy products would be our most effective way of reducing inflation and moving toward ecologically harmonious ways of living."

Finally, I nominate Susantha Goonatilake's *Merged Evolution* (Gordon and Breach, 1998) as a useful peek into the future. Goonatilake (of Sri Lankan birth, now based in the United States) brilliantly explores the interactions among what he calls three different "lineages" of evolution—biology, culture, and artifacts—and focuses on the capacity of information and communications technologies to, as he puts it, "cut a swath through the biological and cultural landscape as no other technology has hitherto done." He does not explicitly address the political and organizational themes that Guéhenno raises, yet his analysis provides a good understanding of how we are entering into an age of open systems—not only political systems but also biological ones—and also why narcissistic visions of green goodness are an inadequate guide to the 21st century.

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Ronald Bailey

In the late 1960s and early '70s a plethora of terrible books about the future were published. In 1968, Paul Ehrlich published the neo-Malthusian classic *The Population Bomb* (Ballantine). "The battle to feed all of humanity is over," he notoriously declared. "In the 1970s the world will undergo famines—hundreds of millions of people are going to starve to death in spite of any crash programs embarked upon now." Ehrlich was far from alone. In 1967, the Paddock brothers, William and Paul, asserted in *Famine 1975!* (Little, Brown) that "the famines which are now approaching...are for a surety, inevitable....In fifteen years the famines will be catastrophic." In 1972, the Club of Rome's *The Limits to Growth* (Universe Books) suggested that at exponential growth rates, the world would run out of gold by 1981, mercury by 1985, tin by 1987, zinc by 1990, petroleum by 1992, and copper, lead, and natural gas by 1993. The end was nigh. The modern heirs to this strain of doomsaying include Lester Brown at the Worldwatch Institute and Vice President Al Gore.

But the silliness was not confined to the environmentalist front. Take a look at John Kenneth Galbraith's 1967 paean to planning, *The New Industrial State* (Houghton Mifflin), in which he asserted: "High technology and heavy capital use cannot be subordinate to the ebb and flow of market demand. They require planning and it is the essence of planning that public behavior be made predictable—that is be subject to control."

Galbraith, too, has heirs—most notably, Robert Reich and

ANDREA BARUFFI

Lester Thurow. In his 1980 book *The Zero-Sum Society* (Basic Books) Thurow suggested that "solving our energy and growth problems demand [sic] that government gets more heavily involved in the economy's major investment decisions....Major investment decisions have become too important to be left to the private market alone." Thurow ended with this revealing claim: "As we head into the 1980s, it is well to remember that there is really only one important question in political economy. If elected, whose income do you and your party plan to cut in the process of solving the economic problems facing us?"

Ultimately, the neo-Malthusians and the zero-summers are pushing the same egalitarian agenda: Stop growth and then divvy up the static pie.

Fortunately, a far more prescient and optimistic intellectual tradition opposed the melancholy millenarians. In 1967, Herman Kahn, the founder of the Hudson Institute, published *The Year 2000*, (Macmillan) in which he laid out a variety of scenarios for the next 33 years. Today's U.S. GDP is at the low end of Kahn's most likely scenario. (Hudson Institute analysts claim that the breakdown of American public education is to blame for this lower than expected GDP.) But Kahn was spot on when he predicted the flooding of women into the work force, the growing equality between the races in the United States, and the boom in Japan. Later, in direct contrast to Thurow, Kahn published *The Coming Boom* (Simon & Schuster, 1982), which predicted the enormous economic growth that the United States has experienced since then. Kahn also pleaded for the reestablishment of "an ideology of progress":

"Two out of three Americans polled in recent years believe that their grandchildren will not live as well as they do, i.e., they tend to believe the vision of the future that is taught in our school system. Almost every child is told that we are running out of resources; that we are robbing future generations when we use these scarce, irreplaceable, or nonrenewable resources in silly, frivolous and wasteful ways; that we are callously polluting the environment beyond control; that we are recklessly destroying the ecology beyond repair; that we are knowingly distributing foods which give people cancer and other ailments but continue to do so in order to make a profit.

"It would be hard to describe a more unhealthy, immoral, and disastrous educational context, every element of which is either largely incorrect, misleading, overstated, or just plain wrong. What the school system describes, and what so many Americans believe, is a prescription for low morale, higher prices and greater (and unnecessary) regulations."

Kahn turned out to be right about the boom, but most of the intellectual class is still burdened with an anti-progress ideology which remains a significant drag on technological and policy innovation.

As for the future, Kahn's Hudson Institute colleague Max Singer is one of the surest guides. If you want to know what the next 50 years will look like, check out Singer's *Passage to a Human World* (Hudson Institute, 1987). He makes the often overlooked point that poor people in the developing world can see their futures by looking at our present. And because poor countries have a road map to development, they will be able to grow wealthier and healthier much faster than we did.

One of the important legacies of Kahn and Singer is the insight that a bright future depends on first believing that such a future is possible. Overcoming the pervasive pessimism of the intellectual class is a major piece of work left for us to do in the 21st century.

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Gregory Benford

Surely the most infamous attempt to predict the economic future was the Club of Rome's *The Limits to Growth* (Universe Books). In 1972 the authors could foresee only dwindling resources, allowing for no substitutions or innovation. The oil shocks soon after lent their work credence, but markets have since erased their gloomy, narrow view of how dynamic economies respond to change. A famous bet over the prices of metals decisively refuted the central thesis of *The Limits to Growth* in 1990: The prices had fallen in real terms, contrary to the Club of Rome's predictions.

Rather than looking at the short run, and getting that wrong, consider peering over the heads of the mob to trace instead long-run ideas that do not necessarily parallel the present. An example of this is J.D. Bernal's *The World, the Flesh and the Devil* (long out of print but available online at physserv1.physics.wisc.edu/~shalizi/Bernal), which examined our prospects in terms that seemed bizarre in 1929 but resonate strongly today: engineered human reproduction, biotech, our extension into totally new environments such as the deep oceans and outer space. This slim book found its proper and continuing audience long after its first edition went out of print, and among hard-nosed futurologists it is still considered a neglected masterpiece.

To my mind, the best way to regard the future is to listen to scientists thinking aloud, making forays into territories seldom explored in our era of intense narrowness. Prediction is speculation, but it often arrives well-disguised. Sometimes it is a brief mention of a notion awaiting exploration, as when James Watson and Francis Crick alluded, in the last sentence of their paper reporting the discovery of DNA's double helix, to the implications for reproduction: "It has not escaped our notice that the specific pairing we have postulated immediately suggests a possible copying mechanism for the genetic material."

In similarly laconic vein, consider a slim tome of stature comparable to Bernal's, Freeman Dyson's *Imagined Worlds* (Harvard University Press, 1997). Dyson in his lofty view shares an advantage with science fiction writers. Both are good at lateral thinking—the sideways swerve into future scenarios justified not by detail but by their intuitive sweep. Refusing to tell us how we get to their visions, Dyson and others take in a wider range of possibility than the hampered futurologists. "Science is my territory," he writes, "but science fiction is the landscape of my dreams."

In five admirably concise essays, Dyson takes us from the near past to the far future. Science and technology must progress through trial and error, he observes, while politics seeks to

mandate outcomes and thus brings disasters. Dirigibles lost out to airplanes partly because of political agendas imposed upon them. The British Comet jetliner failed because management forced fast engineering results. Technology, then, must evolve through its own Darwinnowing.

Necessarily Dyson favors small science ("Tolstoyan") over big projects ("Napoleonic"). In our era of dwindling budgets, this seems the winning view. Luckily, small science governs in the crucial fields of neurobiology and microbiology, which will shape the next century. Attempts to impose big agendas on biology should be resisted.

Cleanly written, elegant in insight, this reflection by one of the great scientist-writers of our time beckons us to the far horizons of the human experience. Such vistas are more interesting, more inspiring, and ever more useful than the short views of the Club of Rome.

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Paul Ehrlich's fearmongering *The Population Bomb* remains the standard to which all doom-and-gloom writers aspire. Fortunately, Ehrlich received the ultimate confirmation of his foolishness in 1990, when he received the MacArthur Foundation's "genius award."

K. Eric Drexler

It was a great surprise when I realized that Robert Ettinger's *The Prospect of Immortality* (Doubleday, 1964) had actually made a sound argument. In the early 1970s I had heard of its thesis—that low temperatures could stabilize otherwise hopeless patients for later repair—but this looked like a technical impossibility. Cells often revive after freezing, but never whole mammals.

This observation, it turns out, is beside the point. By the late '70s, it had become clear that the onrush of molecular technologies would one day lead to thorough control of the structure of matter, including molecular machine systems able to examine and repair biological structures molecule by molecule. Suddenly Ettinger's case made sense. When I finally read his book, I found that he had anticipated molecular-level repair of the sort we now see how to develop. "Can mammals revive from freezing spontaneously?" is the wrong question, once molecular biorepair enters the picture. For us, the key question is instead, "Does freezing somehow erase the information content of the brain?"—which it clearly doesn't.

This idea of long-term, low-temperature first aid, a.k.a. biostasis, is catching on, especially among those who think of their minds as information processes. Watch for those medical bracelets (freely translated, "In case of system crash, do not discard; call...."), especially up here in Silicon Valley. *The San Jose Mercury News* has called this a "Silicon Valley trend."

Soon after realizing that biostasis would work, I came across an impressively false work of prediction: *Entropy,* by Jeremy Rifkin (Viking, 1980). It explains that our world is doomed and that human action must be severely limited, due to the inevitable "dissipation of matter" described by the Fourth Law of Thermodynamics. Senators, academics, and futurists endorsed the book, but it turns out that this "Fourth Law" isn't in the textbooks and is simply false, making the work an edifice of the purest piffle. Rifkin later fuzzed his justifications, but his call for salvation through oppression stays clear.

In their discussions on the future of technology, authors Chris Peterson and Gayle Pergamit observe: "If a thirty-year projection 'sounds like science fiction,' it may be wrong. But if it doesn't sound like science fiction, then it's definitely wrong."

Keep that in mind when you read Marc Stiegler's forthcoming *Earthweb* (Baen Books, April 1999), a novel that plausibly portrays a key part of the future. Stiegler sketches what the Web can become when it grows up—a fast, flexible marketplace of ideas and reputations. He combines the "idea futures" work of Robin Hanson with the "information markets" work of Phil Salin to depict a new and productive spontaneous order. The infoworld Stiegler describes may arrive in the next 10 years, soon enough to shape much of the next 30.

Imagine what the world might be like if good ideas more consistently won and bad ideas more consistently lost. Better media and incentives can help.

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Charles Paul Freund

More nonsense has been written about television than about anything else in the last 30 years, perhaps in the whole of human history. TV, while indisputably reordering life, has purportedly made its audience stupid, inattentive, illiterate, violent, and worse. Choosing the single most ridiculous book on the effects of TV is a challenge, but Jerry Mander's 1978 rant, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (Morrow), is in a class of its own.

Between the covers of this one book are assertions that TV: is a form of sensory deprivation; is addictive; "trains people to accept authority"; is physically unhealthy; suppresses the imagination; hypnotizes its public; is the equivalent of "sleep teaching"; "redesign[s] human minds into a channeled, artificial, commercial form"; and much, much more. Mander wanted TV banned—literally banned—because it was turning people into passive zombies who would do anything they were told. Was he right? Ask the broadcast networks.

James B. Twitchell doesn't like TV much more than Mander does, but he understands it a lot better. "The purpose of television," Twitchell writes in *Carnival Culture* (Columbia, 1992), "is to keep you watching television." How does it try to achieve that goal? By showing us whatever it thinks we want to see. "Television is where we go to be hooked," he writes. "It's our carnival."

Twitchell's book isn't about TV; it's about "taste," and what has happened to it in recent decades. According to him, what happened was the collapse of the old taste hierarchy, the empowerment of the cultural consumer, and the triumph of the "vulgar." There's great power in the vulgar, he reminds us, which is why it was once institutionalized at the margins—as in the annual medieval carnivals—by those who sought to control culture. Now, he writes, thanks to modern media and the freedom made possible by technology, the popular carnival has displaced the high church of good taste.

Where are we and such media taking each other? Sherry Turkle is investigating an interesting line of possibility. In *Life on the Screen* (Simon & Schuster, 1995), Turkle sees whole new forms of personal liberation becoming available online. Not only new communities of people, but new people. Life online, she suggests, makes possible a re-evaluation of identity itself.

Turkle's work concentrates on multi-user domains and the great variety of selves that users can experiment with in such environments. This is a new dimension to our relationship with media and with technology, she argues, one that is shifting our understanding of self, other, and machine.

Turkle may or may not be right about what will happen in the next 30 years, but she and Twitchell are both right about the power that will shape the cultural future: It belongs to media's users. Mander's idea—that such users are the dupes of a technological oligarchy—has been virtually sacralized by a dyspeptic anti-media, technophobic class. But if there's one cultural lesson that the past 30 years have to offer, it is that however much this class pouts, the future doesn't care.

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Milton Friedman got it right in *Capitalism and Freedom*. In a free society, the vast majority of people can be in control of their lives. A free society best provides for those who remain in need. A free society produces the broad economic prosperity often sought through Marxist theory.

Michael Fumento

Whoever said even a stopped clock is right twice a day never heard of Paul Ehrlich. This professional fearmonger switched from studying butterflies to doomsaying in 1968, when he published *The Population Bomb* (Ballantine Books). Among its spectacular claims: "The battle to feed all of humanity is over. In the 1970s the world will undergo famines—hundreds of millions of people [including Americans] are going to starve to death in spite of any crash programs embarked upon now."

Between the "green revolution" in plant technology, a flattening Third World population curve, and imminent population shrinkage in many industrial countries, this prediction, like every major one Ehrlich uttered, fell flat. Still, *The Population Bomb* remains the standard to which all gloom-and-doom writers aspire. Fortunately, Ehrlich received the ultimate confirmation of his foolishness in 1990, when he received the MacArthur Foundation "genius award."

Ehrlich is always wrong because he can't comprehend that human brains are larger than those of butterflies; that we can and do adapt. As shown by the late Julian Simon, in his classic 1982 book *The Ultimate Resource* (Princeton University Press, updated in 1996), when the going gets tough, the tough rise to the occasion and make things as good as—and usually better than—they were. At least, that's true in a free society with a relatively free market. Simon's book is the standard by which environmental myth-busting books should be measured.

Biochemist and medical journalist Alexandra Wyke's *21st Century Miracle Medicine: RoboSurgery, Wonder Cures, and the Quest for Immortality* (Plenum, 1997) is very much in the Simon mold. No talk here about turning old folks into Soylent Green to feed the teeming masses. Instead, she says, advances in biotech, computers, and information technology will change medicine so drastically in our lifetimes that today's therapies may eventually be equated with witch doctoring.

Gene therapy and genetic screening, Wyke says, will tremendously reduce the incidence of cancer, cardiovascular disease, and some neurological diseases. So-called "newly emergent" infections will quickly be controlled by medicines not discovered by happenstance but designed from the ground up by

supercomputers that provide information far more useful than that from rodent testing. Surgery will depend not on the steady hand and experience of the doctor but on devices such as the recently invented ROBODOC, combined with new imagery technology and computers that essentially make flesh and bone transparent in 3-D images, allowing machines to make cuts or dissolve tumors and blockages in exactly the right place.

Initially, such developments will drive up health care costs, Wyke says, but as they proliferate, cut patient recovery times, and save productive lives, they will more than pay their way. She predicts that by 2050, the average life span in developed countries will be a century. Doctors won't disappear, but their role will greatly diminish as computers and robots are increasingly used to diagnose illness, prescribe medicine, and perform surgery.

Predictions beyond 20 years are usually more speculation than science, but I suspect Wyke's forecast is on target. We are already undergoing a medical revolution, with treatments and cures coming at a pace that's furious compared to just a few years ago. Luddites like Jeremy Rifkin will have to be defeated, and death never will. But hold on to your chairs, because we are on the verge of some very exciting times.

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Steven Hayward

First the wrong: Jacques Ellul's *The Technological Society* (Alfred A. Knopf), which was first published in France in 1954 but did not really make a mark until its publication in the United States in 1964, after which it became a favorite of the highbrows within the 1960s counterculture. Ellul, one of those curious figures who made French sociology so much more interesting than the Anglo-American version of the discipline, wrote several worthy books (some of them on theology), but *The Technological Society* was not one of them. It promoted the commonplace view that our advance toward a high-technology future would be dehumanizing. He wondered how we would manage to *control* this portentous technology. The collective problem posed by technology has turned out to be false, of course, as technology empowers people and diminishes government control.

The prophetic: When Charles Murray published *Losing Ground* to great fanfare in 1984, a few graybeards noted that it vindicated Edward Banfield's much-despised 1968 book *The Unheavenly City* (Little, Brown). Banfield challenged the premises of the War on Poverty while it was still in its ideological heyday (even though ordinary citizens had grown tired of it by 1968). He argued that lack of money was the least of the problems of the underclass and predicted that government programs aimed at solving urban poverty were sure to make things even worse. By 1984, Murray was able to fill in the details of Banfield's prophecy. You can draw a straight line from Banfield to Murray to today's welfare reforms, which impose time limits on eligibility, emphasize work, and require individual responsibility.

The future: Francis Fukuyama's 1992 book *The End of History and the Last Man* (The Free Press) deserves a second look, in part because current troubles in the world have given Fukuyama some second thoughts about whether he was correct that liberal democracy represented the final stage in the political evolution of mankind. But the second aspect of his book—the Last Man—also should prompt some fresh chin pulling. The sluggish public reaction to President Clinton's scandals suggests that we are indeed in the condition of Last Men who care only for comfortable self-preservation; the anti-smoking crusade looks like a perfect expression of the snobbery that Fukuyama, following Nietzsche and Kojève, predicted would be the most prominent moral trait of the Last Man. And yet, might the collapse of the tobacco bill have been a turning point? Might the growing support for serious Social Security privatization prove a portent that more of us would indeed like to break out of our rut, as Fukuyama predicted at the end of his book? This might be grasping at straws, but if in fact the progress of the nanny state is not an irreversible process, there is a decent chance that the Last Man of the liberal democratic age need not be a despicable man.

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Charles Murray

They appeared in the same year, 1962: *The Other America,* by Michael Harrington (Macmillan) and *Capitalism and Freedom,* by Milton Friedman (University of Chicago Press). The elite's response to their publication was almost a caricature of the biases of the time. *The Other America* was greeted ecstatically. Dwight McDonald's *New Yorker* review of it was read by John Kennedy and prompted the staff work for the War on Poverty. *Capitalism and Freedom* was not reviewed in any major American newspaper or newsmagazine.

How wrong can one book be? *The Other America* has to be a contender for the world record. Ignore the many evidentiary problems with Harrington's attempt to portray America as a society with 50 million people in poverty. The real damage was done by his underlying premise: Poverty is the fault not of the individual but of the system. Seized upon as the new intellectual received wisdom, this view drove the design of social policy for the next decade: expanded welfare programs that asked nothing from the recipients, a breakdown of accountability in the criminal justice system, erosion of equality under the law in favor of preferences to achieve equal outcomes. All were bad policies that caused enormous damage, underwritten by the assumption that people are not responsible for the consequences of their actions.

Meanwhile, Friedman got it right. In a free society, the vast majority of people can be in control of their lives. It is a free society that best provides for those who remain in need. A free society produces in reality the broad economic prosperity that Harrington sought through Marxist theory. Harrington's book is a road map for understanding just about everything that went wrong with social policy in the last 30 years; Friedman's is a road

map for understanding just about everything that went right.

A book that is likely to be seen 30 years from now as anticipating intellectual trends is E.O. Wilson's *Consilience* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1998). I find its broad vision of a unity of knowledge, a coming together of our understandings in the hard sciences, soft sciences, and humanities, to be compelling. It is perhaps most obvious that sociologists and political scientists must reconcile their conclusions with the discoveries of the geneticists and neuroscientists, but the hard scientists have some bridges to build as well. Ever since the quantum revolution began a century ago, the image of the clockwork universe where everything could be predicted if everything were known has been breaking down. The hard sciences are increasingly one with the poet, recognizing that the universe is not just stranger than we know but stranger than we can imagine. To me, E.O. Wilson's vision of the scholarly future is not just discerning but exciting.

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Paul Samuelson's introductory textbook *Economics* deserves a prominent place in a list of seminal works that completely missed the boat. This great theorist claimed as late as 1989 that "the Soviet economy is proof that ...a socialist command economy can function and even thrive."

John V.C. Nye

Most Mistaken about 1968–1998: Paul Samuelson's *Economics* (various editions, current edition from Irwin co-authored with William Nordhaus). Some colleagues are going to shoot me for this, but Samuelson's introductory textbook deserves a prominent place in a list of seminal works that completely missed the boat. This great mathematical theorist somehow managed to produce a best-selling work that enshrined activist Keynesianism as the mainstream policy instrument (excepting a few "extreme left-wing and right-wing writers" seventh edition, 1967); praised high levels of government taxation and regulatory intervention (opining that the state could play "an almost infinite variety of roles in response to the flaws of the market mechanism," 15th edition, 1995); claimed that there was little observable waste in government spending (third edition, 1955); and systematically overestimated the economic success of the Soviet Union, claiming as late as 1989 that "the Soviet economy is proof that...a socialist command economy can function and even thrive" (13th edition).

Most Far-Sighted: *The Rise of the Western World,* by Douglass North and Robert Paul Thomas (Norton, 1973). Selecting this book might seem like special pleading, as North is both my colleague and a good friend, but there are objective grounds for highlighting the contributions of *The Rise of the Western World.* This book and subsequent work by North (who shared the 1993 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics) helped to change the academic debates about development by focusing attention on the institutions of market capitalism, particularly the rule of law, secure property rights, and the low transactions costs that are the hallmarks of well-functioning markets.

The book dismissed arguments that attributed modern economic growth to technical change as putting the cart before the horse. North and Thomas memorably argued that technology did not cause economic progress, but that technological progress was itself part of the process of modern economic growth ultimately promoted by good institutions. The failure to understand that new technology without sound markets does not produce long-lasting development led to failed policies both in the East bloc, which thought that economic growth was all about building more steel mills, and in the West, with programs designed to transfer capital and technical know-how to the Third World while paying scant attention to the price system and existing political institutions. North's work inspired renewed interest in microeconomic as opposed to macro policies of development throughout the world, and it served as the inspiration for other groundbreaking books, such as Hernando de Soto's *The Other Path.* North's perspective also gave him the insight to criticize conservatives who pushed for simple-minded deregulation in Russia in 1991 without taking into consideration the institutional problems facing the ex-Soviets.

Most Relevant to the Future: *Mercantilism,* by Eli Heckscher (Allen and Unwin, 1935). The rebirth of economic competition as political struggle, best seen in the misguided economic nationalisms of Lester Thurow and Pat Buchanan and compounded by Asia's woes, will give rise to more intense mercantilist struggles in the near future. At home, the limits to direct tax-and-spend policies do not mean that the government will shrink. Instead, efforts increasingly will be shifted to direct regulation and control through unfunded mandates of all forms. Can't have a national health program? No big deal, just require businesses to provide health care and regulate the HMOs. Heckscher forces us to confront the unpleasant fact that the struggle to form viable states inevitably will be accompanied by unpro-

ductive and obtrusive interventions. There is no better way to think about regulation, the rise of the nation-state, and the future of the West than by pondering Heckscher's magnum opus about the growth of mercantilism and the pernicious effects of bad laws on the common welfare. Sadly, it is out of print. Go to your library and read.

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Walter Olson

Policy buffs have long treasured John Kenneth Galbraith as the short sale that keeps on earning: Exhume a copy of *The New Industrial State* (Houghton Mifflin, 1967, out of print except as audiotapes) and marvel at the resistless advent of central planning and "administered" pricing, or the inevitably declining importance of individual creativity amid the coming ascendancy of committees and bureaucracies, to name only two of the trends that have so failed to typify the past 30 years.

With the toppling of the idea of a society run from above by experts, American cities have had a chance to recover from many of the social-engineering schemes that had begun to render them unlivable. Honors for seeing the problem early might be divided between Edward Banfield (*The Unheavenly City*, 1970; *The Unheavenly City Revisited* reissue in 1974, Waveland) and Jane Jacobs (*The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Vintage, 1961). Banfield often gets pegged as a neocon and Jacobs as vaguely countercultural, which points up the dangers of facile categorization based on choosing up sides regarding the '60s: both were in fact defending natural patterns of living against authorities' efforts to superimpose artificial structures on the social (Banfield) and physical (Jacobs) forms of community. Fearless, forthright, and intensely factual to the point of reportage, both books are still terrific reads, while the involuted condescension of Galbraith's style, which so impressed the critics of his day, has worn poorly.

Of the battles ahead, few will involve higher stakes than the defense of the Enlightenment and its libertarian values from assaults of both Left and Right. It's today's most unsettling alliance-in-practice: campus-based identitarians and a prominent body of conservative intellectuals agree with each other that "tolerance" and "free speech" are meaningless or overrated concepts, that claims for the objective authority of science should be cut down to size, that official neutrality on such matters as religion and identity is a chimera, that liberal distinctions between public and private are suspect because they tend to insulate bad conduct from social correction, and so forth. (In the August 17 & 24 *New Republic*, Richard Wolin traces parallels between today's postmodernists and the influential reactionary theorist Joseph de Maistre, who wrote that "what we ought not to know is more important than what we ought to know.")

To see how the antirationalist right met its downfall the first time around, head back to the freethinkers' shelf for another look at Hume and Gibbon and Lecky, Darwin and Tom Huxley, Mencken and Ingersoll; at the moment I'm browsing Andrew D. White's *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1896, Prometheus paperback reissue). The former Cornell president can be dated or quaint, but more often his book is packed with astonishing, colorful, and, yes, inspiring accounts of the achievement we call the modern mind, formed as one discipline after another, from meteorology to sanitation, economics to philology, epistemology to medicine, pulled free from superstition.

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Randal O'Toole

The accurate book: Jane Jacobs's *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Vintage, 1961). After 35 years, Jacobs's book remains the best critique of urban planning—and a wonderful critique of American planning in general. The book almost single-handedly demolished the federally funded urban-renewal movement.

Jacobs was scathing in her attacks on planners. "The pseudoscience of city planning and its companion, the art of city design," she wrote, "have not yet broken with the specious comfort of wishes, familiar superstitions, oversimplifications, and symbols." When "contradictory reality intrudes" on planners' preconceived notions, they merely "shrug reality aside." Ironically, planners today use *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* as a textbook as they try to turn suburbs into the dense cities that Jacobs admired. They ignore her specific warnings against doing so even as they overlook her assaults on their profession.

The fall-flat book: A.Q. Mowbry's *Road to Ruin* (J.B. Lippincott, 1969). *Road to Ruin* was one of the first in an unrelenting series of attacks on the automobile, attacks that continue today in Jane Holtz Kay's *Asphalt Nation* (Crown, 1997) and James Kunstler's *The Geography of Nowhere* (Simon & Schuster, 1993). Americans would rather not drive, these books claim, but they are forced to do so by a conspiracy of auto manufacturers, highway builders, and housing developers. "The automobile population is growing faster than the human population," warned Mowbry. "Under the doctrine that the machine must be served, the highway advocates are already laying plans for an accelerated effort to blanket the nation with asphalt."

Americans today drive three times as many miles as they did when Mowbry wrote. Yet well under 2 percent of the United States has been "blanketed" with asphalt—and much of that was roads before autos were invented. Though *Road to Ruin* and similar books convinced U.S. governments to spend billions of dollars subsidizing urban transit, Americans stubbornly continue to drive nearly everywhere they go. Those hostile to the automobile never see the enormous benefits that the auto has produced.

The next-30-years book: Joel Garreau's *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier* (Doubleday, 1991). Garreau, a *Washington Post* writer, coined the term "edge cities" for the most recent trend

in urban development: concentrations of retailing, manufacturing, and entertainment in new towns on the fringes of major urban areas. Conditioned by writers such as Mowbry, Garreau's first reaction to an edge city was one of horror: "It seemed insane to me. It was a challenge to everything I had been taught: that what this world needed was More Planning; that cars were inherently Evil; that suburbia was morally wrong."

Garreau soon realized that planners had no foundation in reality, while the developers building edge cities had to be in touch with what people wanted, or they would lose their shirts. *Edge City* is as much a celebration of the marketplace as it is a prediction of what 21st-century American cities will look like—provided government doesn't try to keep them in the 19th century.

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John J. Pitney Jr.

In 1969, at the age of 14, I read my first serious book about elections: *The Emerging Republican Majority* (Arlington House), by Kevin Phillips. Its 482 pages of maps, graphs, tables, and analysis grabbed me the way a baseball almanac would fascinate a more normal kid. I've kept my copy all these years, and I recently took a close look at it again. While Phillips's subsequent books (e.g., *The Politics of Rich and Poor*) have been more debatable, this one got it right.

Voting power, he said, was shifting from the Northeast to the Southern and Western states of the Sun Belt—a term that he coined in this book. Since Republicans were strong in the Sun Belt, they could look forward to an advantage in presidential elections. (He made no claims about congressional races.) At the time, many commentators belittled his analysis, noting Goldwater's massive 1964 defeat and Nixon's narrow 1968 victory. Phillips won the argument. Since the publication of the book, every presidential race has gone either to a Sun Belt Republican or a Republican-sounding Southern Democrat.

A year after Phillips foresaw the shape of presidential politics, Charles Reich took on all of society. "There is a revolution coming," he said in *The Greening of America* (Random House). "It promises a higher reason, a more human community, and a new and liberated individual." He never defined his terms precisely, but the new "Consciousness III" apparently spurned materialism, capitalism, and competition. It also meant wearing bell-bottoms. No kidding: "Bell bottoms have to be worn to be understood....They give the ankles a special freedom as if to invite dancing on the street."

Reich pictured the America of the future as "an extended family in the spirit of the Woodstock festival." It didn't happen, thank God. At Woodstock, people who took drugs and rolled around in mud were "hippies" or "flower children." Today we call them "the homeless." Fortunately, many of the Woodstock generation grew up, got haircuts, opened money-market accounts, and joined the emerging Republican majority. Some even subscribe to REASON.

Because of *Greening*, Reich was the most famous professor at Yale Law School at the time that Bill Clinton was attending. Some of Reich's goopier language about idealism seeped into Clinton's rhetoric, but here's one line he won't be quoting: "To be dishonest in love, to 'use' another person, is a major crime."

What comes next? That's the question James P. Pinkerton addressed in his aptly titled 1995 book, *What Comes Next* (Hyperion). The government's vast "Bureaucratic Operating System," he wrote, has degenerated past the point where incremental patches can work. We need a new system that includes privatization, decentralization, elimination of failed agencies, and a fairer way to raise revenue, such as the flat tax.

That's a positive vision of the future, but there's no guarantee that it will come true. Although Republicans have praised these goals, they have lately been timid about acting on the specifics. Too bad. If supporters of free minds and free markets don't act on their beliefs, supporters of bureaucratic government will stay in charge. And the future will bear a depressing resemblance to the past.

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Robert W. Poole Jr.

One of the most prescient books of the past 30 years appeared at the end of 1968: Peter Drucker's *The Age of Discontinuity* (Harper & Row). At a time when the world of policy and government was dominated by the ideas of people like John Kenneth Galbraith, Drucker challenged the conventional wisdom across the board. He foresaw a half-century of fundamental change, in both the U.S. and the global economy, and in the ideas by which we attempt to make sense of the respective roles of government and the private sector, both for-profit and nonprofit. He identified knowledge as the key factor in economic growth, and he challenged governments to rethink their policies so as not to inhibit the huge changes that would be necessary as societies adjusted to the emerging knowledge-based economy—especially the revolution to be unleashed by widespread access to inexpensive computer power.

For me, Drucker's book first identified the concept of "reprivatization," calling for a fundamental rethinking of government's role (seeing it primarily as policy maker and regulator, rather than provider of goods and services). This insight was one of the critical influences that led me to research and write about privatization, and to set up what became the Reason Foundation.

The booby prize for prescience surely belongs to another 1968 volume, Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* (Ballantine). Evincing complete economic ignorance, combined with blindness to demographic evidence already becoming available, Ehrlich presented a Malthusian scenario under which out-of-control population growth would lead to mass starvation. He predicted that even England "will not exist in the year 2000." Despite their obvious absurdity, Ehrlich's views helped ignite today's enor-

mously influential environmental movement.

As for the best book identifying trends that will shape the next 30 years, I want to cheat just a bit by discussing two books. The best book that sets the stage, by documenting the move away from central planning over the past decade, is Daniel Yergin and Joseph Stanislaw's *The Commanding Heights* (Simon & Schuster, 1998). The book's central theme is the replacement of the idea of "government knowledge" with the idea of "market knowledge," an insight the authors correctly trace to Nobel laureate F.A. Hayek.

But while *The Commanding Heights* is reportorial, it is not very analytical or predictive. The most profound book that examines the underlying factors and trends that will shape this country over the next several decades is Virginia Postrel's *The Future and Its Enemies* (The Free Press, 1998). This delightful book is an exercise in applying Hayek's insights about the dynamics of a free market and a free society to turn-of-the-millennium America. If you want to see what "spontaneous order" means when applied to the complex, high-tech world in which we will spend the rest of our lives, you should read this book.

Ithiel de sola Pool's *Technologies of Freedom* foresaw today's front-page clashes over the Internet. Writing in a world of slow, clunky, text-based networks, he anticipated the rise of a high-speed Internet and its expansion into a popular medium—and resistance from central authorities.

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Virginia Postrel

Thirty years ago, conventional wisdom held that to reap the benefits of science, technology, and markets, we must deny ourselves fun. This repression theory of progress, derived from turn-of-the-century sociologist Max Weber, was just as popular in the counterculture as it was in the establishment. The only question was which side of the tradeoff you preferred.

Among the most influential expositions of this view was Daniel Bell's *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (Basic Books). In this 1976 book, Bell embraced the repression theory but observed that rising living standards were eroding the Puritan ethic. Capitalism, he argued, would destroy itself by encouraging hedonistic play: "In America, the old Protestant heavenly virtues are largely gone, and the mundane rewards have begun to run riot....The world of hedonism is the world of fashion, photography, advertising, television, travel. It is a world of make-believe in which one lives for expectations, for what will come rather than what is....Nothing epitomized the hedonism of the United States better than the State of California."

Bell's book became a touchstone for intellectuals on both the left and the right, so much so that a 20th anniversary edition was proudly issued in 1996. But its thesis had been falsified during the intervening decades. Far from destroying capitalism, play proved a great spur to progress and prosperity. Obsession, not repression, was the key. Nothing epitomized the trend better than the state of California.

The book that correctly captured this trend was set, however, in the Puritans' old stomping ground of Massachusetts. The cover of my paperback edition describes *The Soul of a New Machine* (Little, Brown and Avon) as "the phenomenal bestseller!" and it was indeed a phenomenon, winning the Pulitzer Prize in 1982. Tracy Kidder's nonfiction tale of engineers racing the clock to build a minicomputer that would "go as fast as a raped ape" alerted the literati that something big was going on among the technology nerds. "In technical creativity they have found a fulfillment that occasionally verges on ecstacy," reported *The New York Times.* Nowadays, that insight is hardly news. Thirty years ago, it was unthinkable.

All we can say about work 30 years hence is that it will be different. Two short stories suggest possible evolutions. Bruce Sterling's "The Beautiful and the Sublime," anthologized in *Crystal Express* (Ace, 1990), imagines a world in which "the ability to reason...comes through the wires just like electricity," thanks to advances in artificial intelligence. With reason cheap and abundant, markets and social life reward the aesthetic, and artistic temperaments are prized. The story's particulars are fanciful, but it provides a useful antidote to assumptions that today's economic totem pole will be tomorrow's.

Neal Stephenson's "Jipi's Day at the Office," published in the 80th anniversary issue of *Forbes* (July 7, 1997) similarly imagines a world in which intangible personal qualities define one's economic value. The title character has an unusual knack for soothing the irritable, a quality she applies to making her employer's resort particularly pleasant. On this day, however, she must persuade a paranoid, artificially intelligent car bomb not to blow. Not exactly fun, but the sort of wits-matching game that fits nowhere in Bell's repression thesis.

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Enterprise, and Progress, *just published by The Free Press.*

Adam Clayton Powell III

The future is always with us, but the past is ever more so. And it is only the gifted who can peer into the future without straying to focus on the rear-view mirror of what we have already put behind us.

George Orwell's *1984* (Harcourt Brace) became an instant science fiction classic, widely viewed as a glimpse into future decades. But it was far more focused on 1948 than 1984, and the world of Big Brother was in truth the world of Hitler and Stalin. The Berlin Wall and what it represented ultimately collapsed, brought down by the determined rise of empowered, free individuals. And a key tool was the spreading of information technologies, from the Xerox machine to the Internet.

The best commentary on this shift was not in the book *1984* but in a television commercial in the year 1984. The ad was produced for Apple, introducing the then-new Macintosh computer. Broadcast only once, it featured a meeting hall full of drone-like people watching a huge screen displaying an image evoking *1984*'s Big Brother. A young woman burst into the back of the hall, ran up the aisle toward the screen and smashed it with a huge hammer.

Enter the Mac. Exit Big Brother.

Just a year before that commercial, *Technologies of Freedom* (Harvard University Press) correctly anticipated today's front-page clashes of central authority and the Internet. Writing in a world of slow, clunky, text-based networks, MIT professor Ithiel de sola Pool anticipated the rise of a high-speed Internet and its expansion into a popular medium—and resistance from central authorities.

"As speech increasingly flows over those electronic media, the five-century growth of an unabridged right of citizens to speak without controls may be endangered," he wrote at the end of the book's very first paragraph. And then he proceeded to outline cases, past and future, describing how the new technology has in its nature the seeds of freedom.

"Electronic technology is conducive to freedom," he wrote. "The degree of diversity and plenitude of access that mature electronic technology allows far exceeds what is enjoyed today. Computerized information networks of the twenty-first century need not be any less free for all to use without let or hindrance than was the printing press. Only political errors make them so."

A decade later, in *Winchell: Gossip, Power and the Culture of Celebrity* (Vintage Books, 1995), author Neal Gabler captured the rise of mass media and of celebrity-centered popular infotainment. Gabler was concerned not with freedom itself but with the implications of the rise of nonelite media. Gabler told this through the story of Walter Winchell. Decades before his role narrating *The Untouchables* television series, Winchell had been a top columnist and radio commentator, inventing the modern popular gossip column, celebrity-centered network newscasts, and even the very feel of network news, "its breathlessness, its ellipses, its abrupt shifts, its drama."

Winchell covered a broad range of people we would now call celebrities: "chorus girls, prize fighters, restaurateurs, journalists and even politicians like [New York City mayor] Jimmy Walker" —and his friend, Franklin D. Roosevelt. And Winchell wasn't even a journalist!

Gabler could have been writing about Matt Drudge or the latest Web site designer. And he may have written a clear look at the future of popular media.

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John Shelton Reed

A book that got it wrong, huh? But there are so *many*, and they're wrong in so many different ways....How about something by the Chicken Little of population studies, Paul Ehrlich? One of his more fevered imaginings is *The End of Affluence: A Blueprint for Your Future* (Ballantine Books, 1974), but any of a half-dozen others would do as well. Ehrlich started his doomsaying career in 1968 (a big year for doomsaying) with *The Population Bomb*, (Ballantine Books) and he's been at it so long that he has become a sort of endearing figure, the Harold Stassen of environmentalism.

Speaking of Republicans, my candidate for a book that got it mostly right is *The Emerging Republican Majority* (Arlington House, 1969), by Kevin Phillips. How we laughed at Phillips's title when the Republicans got creamed in 1974! But he had the underlying demographic and cultural trends spot on, as Reagan demonstrated and the 1994 elections confirmed. The only way the Democrats can elect a president now is to nominate a Southerner who talks like a Republican (at least long enough to get elected), and even so it takes a real doofus like Ford, Bush, or Dole to screw it up for the Republicans. Of course, the Republicans seem to seek these guys out.

Finally, for a book that may tell us something about the next 30 years, I'm going to play a wild card: Walker Percy's *Love in the Ruins: The Adventures of a Bad Catholic at a Time Near the End of the World* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). Published in 1971, this gets a few things wrong (Spiro Agnew is mentioned as a revered elder statesman), but what resident won't recognize Dr. Tom More's Louisiana hometown, which "has become a refuge for all manner of conservative folk, graduates of Bob Jones University, retired Air Force colonels, passed-over Navy commanders, ex-Washington, D.C., policemen, patriotic chiropractors, two officials of the National Rifle Association, and six conservative proctologists"? The center isn't holding: "Americans have turned against each other; race against race, right against left, believer against heathen, San Francisco against Los Angeles, Chicago against Cicero. Vines sprout in sections of New York where not even Negroes will live. Wolves have been seen in downtown Cleveland, like Rome during the Black Plague." The Republicans and Democrats have reorganized as the Knothead and Left parties, but it hardly matters: "Don't tell me the U.S.A. went down the drain because of Leftism, Knotheadism, apostasy, pornography, polarization, etcetera, etcetera," Dr. Tom says. "All these things may have

happened, but what finally tore it was that things stopped working and nobody wanted to be a repairman." Bracing stuff.

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Lynn Scarlett

Two ideas dominated political philosophy in the 20th century. The first was that mankind could collectively define the "good order." The second was that mankind could bring about this order through collective planning. These ideas were not new. But in the 20th century, they took root and sprouted as grand movements, like the Soviet communist experiment, and in more modest endeavors, like city renewal projects.

By the 1960s, almost no city planner challenged the idea of "the plan." Then came Jane Jacobs. In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Vintage, 1961), she announced, "this book is an attack on current city planning and rebuilding." Jacobs described cities as "fundamentally dynamic." She celebrated diversity. Jacobs argued that cities were problems of "organized complexity," by which she meant that cities represented the "intricate minglings of different users." Cities were, she wrote, created through the "vastly differing ideas and purposes" of different people, all "planning and contriving outside the formal framework of public action." She saw attempts to impose order, by moving people around "like billiard balls" to new locations, as destructive of the organized complexity that kept cities vibrant.

Jacobs was right. Her prescience anticipated public housing project debacles and sterile redevelopment programs of the 1970s and '80s. But her vision extended beyond city problems. She recognized and celebrated unplanned order, the importance of feedback, competition, and innovation—ideas re-entering late 20th-century political debates about environmentalism, global economies, communications systems, and technological evolution.

Rewind half a century to the writings of French philosopher Jacques Ellul, in whom we find a mental map of another sort. Where Jacobs celebrated uncertainty, complexity, and spontaneous order, Ellul, in *The Technological Society* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1954) and subsequent books, offered a near-incoherent mix of contempt for uncertainty and yearning for self-will and choice.

Robert Ellickson's *Order Without Law* shows how real people in real communities achieve cooperation. It proposes that widening the realms in which informal bargaining, negotiation, and trade can supplant order generated through statute is the challenge for the next century.

Jacobs launched her views using the city as her subject; Ellul targeted technology. His thesis: Technology dominates all else. It destroys traditional social structures, imagination, and values—all that makes us human.

Ellul is, above all, what REASON Editor Virginia Postrel calls a stasist. He does not oppose technology but wants to control it. By the 1990s, Ellul was lamenting that "no one has taken charge of the system." In uncertainty, he sees a kind of disorder and amorality.

But Ellul has it wrong. The very uncertainty and change in human structures that he describes is not generating a society of mere consumers and game players. Technology is allowing new social forms, new relationships, new possibilities for human imagination, interaction, and cooperation.

Cooperation is not always—or even often—wrought by some great "we" taking charge and dictating outcomes, an insight explored by Yale law and economics scholar Robert Ellickson in his 1991 book *Order Without Law* (Harvard University Press). Ellickson remarks that in everyday speech we refer to "'law and order,' which implies that governments monopolize the control of misconduct. This notion is false." Ellickson, like Jacobs 30 years earlier, is an idea buster. He proposes that among human settlements, cooperation is the norm; conflict the exception. And cooperation is often achieved without recourse to law. Instead, it is achieved through ever-evolving informal rules that generate mutual gain.

Ellickson's work is empirical. He shows how real people in real communities achieve cooperation. But his thesis is playing out in a broader political and philosophical tableau in which states, regions, and cities increasingly struggle with the clumsiness of statutes and the inability of laws to deal with the complexities of human interaction and physical reality. Not all circumstances are alike, but statutes require uniformity. Informal social and economic interactions offer a more resilient, adaptive, and evolutionary response to circumstance. Widening the realms in which informal bargaining, negotiation, and trade can supplant order generated through statute is the challenge for the next century. The former builds on human cooperation; the latter reinforces propensities for conflict. Ellickson's *Order Without Law* anticipates the potentially deepening tensions between formal and informal orders.

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SPECIAL BOOK SECTION

California Dreaming

By Nick Gillespie

Paradise Lost: California's Experience, America's Future, by Peter Schrag, New York: The New Press, 344 pages, $25.00

From West to East: California and the Making of the American Mind, by Stephen Schwartz, New York: The Free Press, 566 pages, $30.00

In 1993, my wife and I moved from Buffalo, New York, to Los Angeles—a trip that cannot be measured in miles alone. As envious—and horrified—friends and relatives were quick to point out, we were not simply changing an address or time zone. We were going to *California*, the place that has singularly fired the nation's imagination for decades both as a golden land of hope, growth, and limitless opportunity and as a dark locus of fear, decadence, and broken dreams—a dichotomy perhaps even more descriptive of Los Angeles than the state as a whole.

For every person who regaled us with Beach Boys–inspired reveries of an Endless Summer, someone else held up the Manson family as the true apotheosis of the California lifestyle. (In fact, such extreme fantasies may well be inextricably linked: The Beach Boys, after all, recorded a Manson-penned song under the unlikely title "Never Learn Not to Love.") Surely no piece of American real estate conjures up as many good, bad, and ambivalent images as does California.

That's a major reason why moving to California—immortalized in popular tunes as absurdly different as "California, Here I Come" and Led Zeppelin's "Going to California"—is to participate in a great mythic American adventure, one expansive and resilient enough to encompass the experience of gold miners in the 1840s, movie pioneers in the 1910s, Okies in the Depression, hippies in the '60s, and continual waves of immigrants from all over the world. While it's conventional wisdom to say that California is a political bellwether for the rest of the country, it's less recognized that the state is also a sort of psychic gauge for the nation as well. The way we envision California tells us something larger about who we are and how we feel about the future.

Two recent books by self-consciously Californian writers—Peter Schrag's *Paradise Lost: California's Experience, America's Future* and Stephen Schwartz's *From West to East: California and the Making of the American Mind*—do precisely this. In different but related ways, each explores the deep meaning of some aspect of the cult of California. Tellingly, each also suggests that the version of the California dream its author most cherishes is either played out or ruined beyond repair.

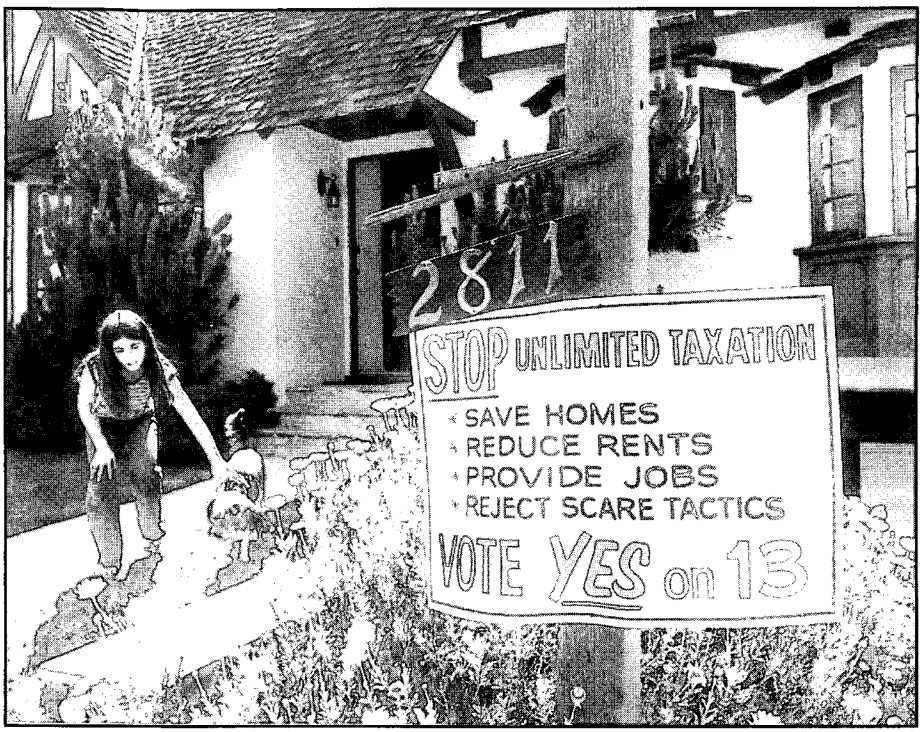
Schwartz's *From West to East* is a long, sweeping history of California—it begins with the 1542 landing of explorer João Rodrigues Cabrillo in what is now Baja California and runs up to the present day—that is consistently engaging and interesting. Schwartz, a staffer at the *San Francisco Chronicle* and a sharply critical historian of the American left, is interested in what he calls the "hidden" or "secret" history of California's intellectual and cultural identity and its ultimate "conquest of the world."

As his title suggests, Schwartz's provocative thesis is a refutation of Bishop Berkeley's famous phrase that "Westward the course of empire makes it way." Schwartz argues persuasively that, due to a singular confluence of geography, people, and historical providence, California has never been a blank screen upon which Americans projected various manifest destinies. Rather, California colonized those who came to settle it. It was "a mirror for the world that ended up changing the face of human society forever." For Schwartz, the essence of California is "radicality... not based on a radical ideology or ism *per se* but, experientially rather than conceptually, ever embodying the new." It, he says, "has never really undergone a period of pure stability and institutional conservatism. Of no other human aggregation in history can the same be said."

As the above illustrates, and despite his explicit rejection of "booster" history and "official legends," Schwartz is not at all reserved in his California exceptionalism (which is perhaps the ultimate legend, official or otherwise, about the place). Still, his basic framework allows him to weave interesting threads through centuries of history and to present the reader with a cast of fascinating characters, ranging from

Junipero Serra, the 18th-century Spanish missionary who has always been seen as both a beneficent "civilizer" of native Americans and "a tool of pure Spanish imperialism and a brutal enslaver of the Indians"; William Walker, the San Francisco–based "filibuster" who, in the mid-1800s, launched various attempts to take over Latin American countries, including one that left him, briefly, in charge of Nicaragua; and Jaime de Angulo, the Paris-born ethnographer who helped transform Big Sur into a Bohemian arts center.

According to Schwartz, California history, especially in the 20th century, is ultimately a story about the melding of radical politics and radical aesthetics—and the failure of both to sustain themselves. He details the multiple and often-tortured relationships between groups such as the Wobblies, the Communist Party, and EPIC (End Poverty in California) and artists such as Jack London, John Steinbeck, and Upton Sinclair.



Electoral Earthquake: 1978's Proposition 13, contends Peter Schrag, killed the California dream by setting in motion a "holy crusade against taxes" and capping public spending.

AP / WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Schwartz ultimately—and interestingly—presents the poet Kenneth Rexroth as the exemplar of the California culture that would win over the world. A Midwestern transplant to the Bay Area, Rexroth "was equally a social revolutionary and a mystic, deeply curious about nature and an exceptionally acute observer of people and trends," writes Schwartz. A Communist Party member in the '30s and a co-founder of the first John Reed Club in California, Rexroth became disillusioned with Stalinism and turned instead toward an anarchistic, anti-statist pacifism. As an early translator of Japanese and Chinese works, he was instrumental in introducing Buddhism into American culture and absolutely central in building the exceptionally fecund arts community in northern California.

Schwartz reads in the arc of Rexroth's life—he would eventually leave the politically charged Bay Area for "hedonistic" Santa Barbara and an easy university post—the apparent end of radical California. When Rexroth died in 1982, writes Schwartz, "Octavio Paz, who had long admired him noted that near his end Rexroth had described the main characteristic of the twentieth century as the loss of revolutionary hopes."

So it goes with California, suggests Schwartz. In the wake of the 1960s, he says, "California swept the world with its radical culture. But it had produced no new idea, no new movement; rather, it evinced an innovation that was radical, but on a wholly different level: the transformation of *social revolt* into *aesthetic style*....This was California's great invention, and it explained both the suddenness with which it triumphed and the equal abruptness with which, intellectually at least, it declined." Schwartz undercuts such pessimism with a last-page invocation of the "'information revolution' in which Silicon Valley plays so large a role....and in which we may see the ultimate Californian idea" but seems unable or unwilling to grapple extensively with a radicalism not based in explicitly political movements.

That's a shame—not only would a reader benefit from an account of such developments by someone with Schwartz's great ability to mine mountains of material, but it seems clear that activities rooted in Silicon Valley—ranging from novel ways of structuring corporate environments to the creation of the truly personal computer—have already transformed our daily lives far more profoundly than the activities of the Wobblies or the Communist Party ever did.

If Stephen Schwartz worries that California is no longer a truly radical place, then Peter Schrag frets that it is no longer a truly livable place. His book's title—*Paradise Lost: California's Experience, America's Future*—lays out a different variation on the west-to-east theme. The Golden State, argues Schrag, a former editorial page editor for the *Sacramento Bee*, was once a "model and magnet for the nation—in its economic opportunities, its social outlook, and its high-quality public services and institutions."

Now, he submits in alternately wistful and angry tones, California "is no longer the progressive model in its public institutions and services, or in its social ethic, that it once was." Indeed, the situation is so extreme that Schrag creates a readily understood, if overblown, neologism—

"Mississippification"—to describe the process that he believes is taking place.

For Schrag, California's demise is identical to what he considers the ruin of its public sector. He quotes a 1939 WPA Guide (of all sources) to the effect that once residents felt a "personal pride in the State's gargantuan public works: highways, bridges, dams and aqueducts" and points to the 1959–67 reign of Gov. Edmund (Pat) Brown as the "high point" and "Golden Moment" of the place—a "stunning run" when the government literally moved mountains, built one college campus after another, and never let a lack of funds stop it from writing a check.

Now, says Schrag, Californians have been evicted from Eden. The underfunded public schools are no good anymore; the freeways are in disrepair; public libraries have shortened their hours if not shut their doors altogether; and "the state's social benefits, once among the nation's most generous, have been cut, and cut again, and then cut again."

The snake in the grass of Schrag's paradise is the ballot initiative process. This is no easy admission for the author, who, as a professed admirer of populist reformers, notes in passing that California's initiative law, passed in 1911, is itself "a Progressive Era instrument whereby 'the people' could from time to time check the excesses of a state government." For Schrag, the fall from grace began in earnest with the 1978 passage of Proposition 13, which capped property tax rates at 1 percent of assessed valuation, stipulated that assessed valuation can rise no more than 2 percent annually, and mandated that local special taxes and bond measures need a two-thirds vote to pass.

Prop. 13, writes Schrag, "set in motion not merely the holy crusade against taxes in which much of the country now seems irretrievably stuck, but a condition of permanent neopopulism in California.... California has been in nearly constant revolt against representative government. [Since Prop. 13], voters have passed one initiative after another—tax limitation initiatives; initiatives capping state and local spending; measures imposing specified minimum spending formulas for schools; term limits for legislative and statewide offices; three-strikes sentencing laws; land conservation measures; the measures abolishing affirmative action in public education, contracting, and employment, and seeking to deny public schooling and other services to illegal immigrants, and dozens of others—each of them mandating or prohibiting major programs and policies, or imposing supermajority requirements."

Schrag's Eden, it seems, is purely a public-works project. Such an emphasis is more than a little misguided, for it has always been the jobs and work opportunities California offered that, at rock bottom, drew people West and fired their imaginations.

While Schrag is correct to note that ballot initiatives are an extremely blunt political instrument—and that some of the campaigns have appealed to voters' baser instincts—he never convincingly demonstrates why initiatives are somehow less representative of the voters' will than a state legislature that he himself recognizes is just as easily captured by special interests. Similarly, he doesn't bother to explain why requiring a two-thirds majority for tax increases is a bad thing.

More specifically, his condemnation of Prop. 13 for killing public-sector spending is not particularly convincing: In fact, the total state tax burden has more than doubled since the early '60s and state per-capita spending in real dollars has more than tripled. Between 1991 and 1996 alone, state spending rose from $38 billion to $50 billion in constant dollars. And, as Schrag points out, in 1997, 26 of 38 school bond measures passed the two-thirds standard enacted by Prop. 13. That such spoils are not spent wisely or efficiently is an argument against public-sector spending, not evidence that it does not exist.

In the end, Schrag is railing against the end of the Big Government era, against the recognition that governments cannot indefinitely tax and spend without destroying their economies. This is, of course, a development that ranges far beyond California's borders (debates about the need to reduce the social-welfare state have even emerged in such Old World strongholds as France and Germany). But Schrag seems manifestly uninterested in doping out the long-term connection between public spending and the private sector that ultimately pays for such largess, other than to assert that Californians are not now and have never been "overtaxed." (He is similarly uninterested in considering the ways the welfare state intensifies social fragmentation by pitting special interest groups, often constituted along racial, ethnic, and class lines, against one another in a struggle for tax money and special treatment.)

Schrag's virtually complete lack of interest in California's private sector is perhaps the ultimate failing of *Paradise Lost.* His Eden, it seems, is purely a public-works project. Such an emphasis is more than a little misguided, for it has always been the jobs and work opportunities California offered that, at rock bottom, drew people West and fired their imaginations.

Certainly, that was the case with my wife and me back in the early '90s—a time Schrag describes so despairingly—when we migrated to Los Angeles so I could take a job with REASON. A similar motive also spurred most of the people who lived in our modest and mixed apartment complex, where the other renters included an extended family of eight Mexican immigrants who shared a one-bedroom apartment (the men saved money from day-labor jobs and the women collected bottles and cans for deposits); a Salvadoran couple who cleaned offices at night and who had three children between the ages of 6 and 11; an ethnic Hawaiian trying to learn the

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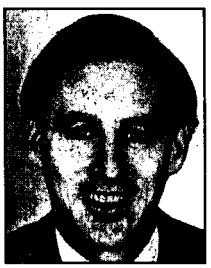

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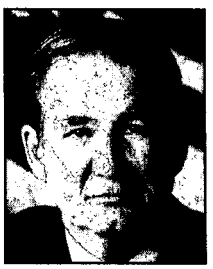

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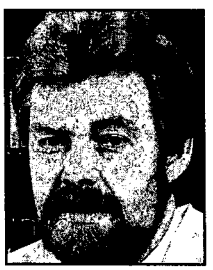

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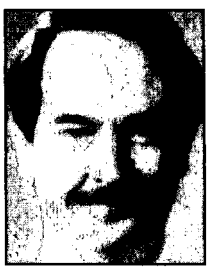

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hotel business; and a young, aspiring architect from Mexico City.

If it is true that America is a country not defined for immigrants but by them, then the same holds true for California. Although there were, of course, vast differences among us, we all had moved to California in pursuit of the same thing—a better situation in the present and increased options for the future. That is, to be sure, something far more modest than Schwartz's utopian "radicality" and it is also distinct from Schrag's vision of paradise. But it is a potent version of the California dream—and the larger American dream of which it is a subset—that not only remains alive, but well.

Senior Editor Nick Gillespie (gillespie@reason.com) now lives in Ohio.

What's Left?

By Alan Charles Kors

Liberalism and Its Discontents, by Alan Brinkley, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 384 pages, $27.95

The Dark Side of the Left: Illiberal Egalitarianism in America, by Richard J. Ellis, Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 426 pages, $34.95

Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America, by Richard Rorty, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 159 pages, $18.95

The American left is in crisis. For most of the 20th century, it thought that the only significant debates were among its own factions. Now it has lived through the election and re-election of Ronald Reagan. It has witnessed the collapse of planned economies. Political correctness, the left's latest gift to an ungrateful nation, has become the object of popular derision. Republicans control both houses of Congress, and politicians run from the appellation "liberal." The left increasingly asks what went wrong and where it should go from here. These works are three diverse contributions to that discussion.

In *Liberalism and Its Discontents*, Columbia historian Alan Brinkley offers a set of essays and lectures loosely linked under the topic of what has happened to liberalism. They are uneven in quality, covering topics that range from the young FDR to Southern politics to the career of Allard Lowenstein, the prime mover of the revolt against LBJ's candidacy in the Democratic Party in 1968. In his brief history of the 1960s, "The Therapeutic Radicalism of the New Left," Brinkley rightly sees the counterculture as a revolution of rising expectations. He fails, however, to understand the authentic passion of anti-Stalinism on the Old Left (would anyone keep referring to anti-Hitlerism as an "obsession"?) and blames the apolitical hippies rather than the ultraradical crazies for the counterculture's "failure" (if he's right, we can chalk up one more obligation to the hippies).

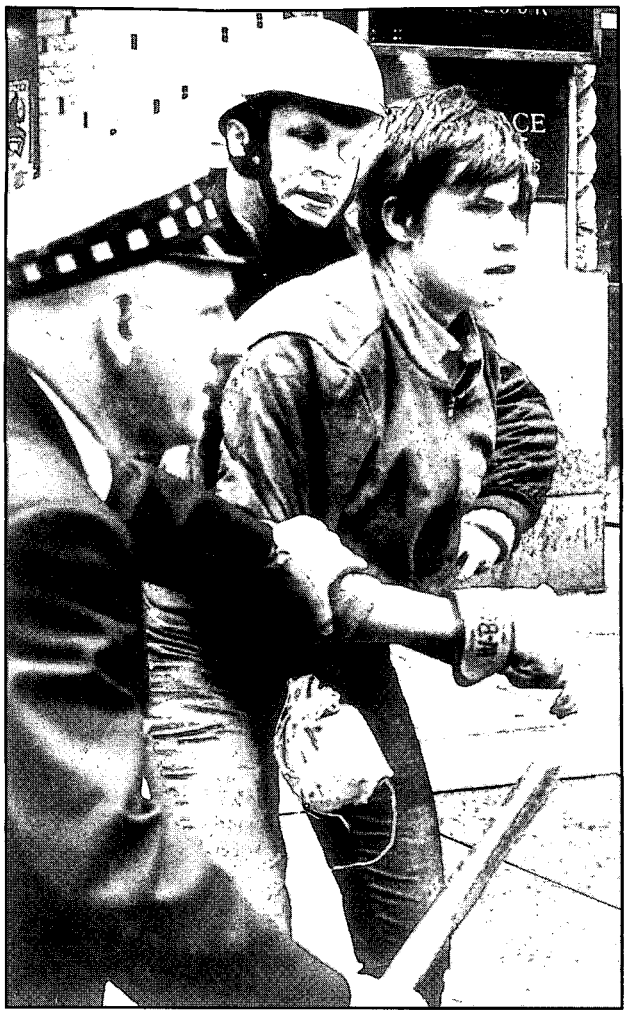
It is a mark of the sad state of American history as a profession that Brinkley correctly congratulates himself for the freshness of his own view that there has been serious opposition to modern liberalism in America, alive in various populisms, sundry traditionalisms, and a vibrant libertarian school of thought. Despite his best efforts, however, Brinkley hopelessly confuses these three intellectual and political tendencies. "The Problem of American Conservatism" (meaning its problem for historians, not its internal problem) conflates F.A. Hayek, George Wallace, Richard Nixon, and the Chicago school of economics, among many equally disparate other elements, as "the right." For mainstream American historians, the "problem" apparently remains.

The heart of Brinkley's thesis about the fate of liberalism is that the inspirational vision of the New Deal gradually has been undermined by regional differences, unsolved problems, structural changes, and the whirlwind of the New Left and the '60s. Brinkley is best as a scholar of the New Deal and its legacy. His narrative of the phases, improvisations, camps, debates, and transmutations of the New Deal is fresh and probing, and it sheds genuine light on individuals, tensions, and turning points. He understands well that the deep recession of 1937 caught the New Dealers wholly by surprise and forced more-radical revisions in their thinking than the experience of 1932. He accurately concludes that the New Deal "did not end the Great Depression and the massive unemployment that accompanied it." Rather, it "greatly, and permanently, expanded the role of the federal government in American life." Although this was more a "symbolic" than "substantive" change as measured by the quality of people's lives, it altered their expectations of government, which now became the broker among competing demands for security, protection, and advantage.

In the final analysis, Brinkley writes, activist government reconciled the reformist instinct with the essentials of capitalism. That is not a new thesis, of course—the radical left, above all, has looked at the New Deal that way—but it is well argued here. In contrast to left-wing, right-wing, and libertarian critics of the New Deal, Brinkley sees this reconciliation as an inspirational accomplishment that freed liberals to pursue their other exhilarating but problematic "crusades": "fighting for civil rights, eliminating poverty, saving the en-

vironment, protecting [the world from] communism, reshaping the world." He does not assess their success in any of these.

Richard Ellis's *The Dark Side of the Left* is an effort to explain what seems problematic to him though obvious to many of us: How does it happen that leftist egalitarians in America often begin with humanitarian idealism and end in violent intolerance? Before tackling this question, Ellis, a professor of politics at Willamette University, seeks to establish his liberal bona fides. He makes certain we know that he voted for Carter, Mondale, Dukakis, and Clinton (twice); that he supports, among other things, public broadcasting and environmentalism; and that he believes "politicians, bureaucrats, and the federal government generally make this country a better place." Thus assured of his wisdom and virtue, we are prepared for his attempt to "toughen" the liberal tradition by criticizing it.



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Up Against the Wall, Sonny Boy: On the New Left, Richard Ellis offers an astute descriptive autopsy and notes the movement's "dark side" was first displayed by its early members.

Ellis examines how egalitarianism turned "illiberal" in three periods of American history: the 19th and early 20th centuries (radical abolitionists, utopian communities, elitist democratic disdain for common lives); the 1960s (Students for a Democratic Society and the New Left in general); and the 1980s and '90s (radical feminism and radical environmentalism). Ellis creates a confusing congeries by terming all of this "illiberal egalitarianism."

When the issue is self-ownership vs. slavery, for example, almost all lovers of liberty have embraced the tragic necessity of violence. David Donald's classic study of the abolitionists' hatred of Lincoln, *Lincoln Reconsidered*, tells us far more about the dysfunctional sides of the radical abolitionists' absolutist politics than Ellis's sense that there was something fearsome about their either–or approach. He calls their attitude "Manichean," even though this was one of the rare cases where the issues actually were, literally and metaphorically, black and white.

In his account of utopian communities, Ellis ignores the essential point that these were wholly voluntary associations. The inability of such communities to sustain or even realize their cooperative ideals may be instructive about human nature and small communities, but it is not of a piece with efforts to coerce others into ways of life in which they lose their freedom to choose.

Nonetheless, there is lots of grand stuff in Ellis's work. He is at his best, displaying a fine ear for detail, when examining the dissonance between the love of radical intellectuals for the masses in the abstract and their contempt for ordinary lives in the particular. He probably errs, however, in seeing the myriad New York artists and intellectuals who fall into this category as the "heirs" of Walt Whitman, in whose work it is often difficult to distinguish between poetic hyperbole and actual judgment. He's got the textual goods on Whitman, but this poet usually overflows the categories in which we try to contain him, as a student of American culture should know.

On SDS and the New Left, Ellis offers an astute descriptive autopsy—pathologies, failures, ideological narcissism, self-defeating social organization, and sectarianism gone over the edge —even if he lacks a convincing theory about the etiology of the patient's fatal malady or about why the plague emerged in France, Germany, and England at the same time it appeared in America. Despite reiterated assurances that he is not doing so, Ellis wrongly contrasts the supposed tolerance of the New Left's first generation with the murderous furies and detachment of the second generation, which came of age after the Tet offensive. As he knows (well enough to qualify his thesis frequently but always inadequately), the "dark side" of the New Left was displayed first and foremost by its early members as they grew older. Ellis sees clearly that when the objects of the radicals' love, the American "underclass," refused to love them back—wanting, of all things, a better material life for themselves and their children—the radicals turned against an "Amerika" that could not even produce a worthy set of domestic victims and began their romance with revolutionary killers in the Third World.

In his discussion of SDS, Ellis raises a deep analytical issue that relates to what

the German sociologist Robert Michels, in his 1911 book *Political Parties*, called the "iron law of oligarchy." Based on the experience of European socialist parties, Michels inferred that even in the most ostensibly egalitarian organizations, structural and psychological imperatives lead inevitably to division of labor, hierarchy, and a set of leadership interests distinct from the interests of the organization's nominal constituents. (In contemporary terms, Michels discovered revolutionary rent seeking.) For Ellis, the SDS experience was Michels's model in reverse. SDS's aversion to bureaucracy and organization led not to stable hierarchy but to charismatic leadership, disguised and unaccountable. Instead of making the organization more "conservative" than its rhetoric, as in Michels's model, charismatic leadership made it ever more radical and disconnected. Ellis does not explore his notion of charisma and its political effects adequately, but his use of Michels is provocative.

Ellis's discussions of radical feminism and environmentalism are less successful. The people in these movements are his contemporaries, which may explain why he moves too often from analysis to polemic. At times, he simply reacts rather than weighing his words. His discussion of Catharine MacKinnon, for example, is often ad hominem, and it asserts rather than demonstrates inconsistencies and betrayals of her own values. In effect, he argues against MacKinnon as she argues against others.

By contrast, alas, Ellis takes very seriously the work of Susan Okin, who believes that gender hierarchy lies at the heart of social injustice and argues that even if husband and wife choose to live in a hierarchical marriage, the state should not allow it, "for the sake of the children." Ellis finds Okin "lucid," "powerful," and "unsettling"—above all, because she acknowledges the conflict between "personal freedom" and "social justice." In the end, his strongest argument against her is that the abolition of voluntary hierarchy in marriage would give too much power to the state. He should worry more about her than about the abolitionists.

Concerning the radical environmentalists, Ellis is entertaining and informative, but they fit ill with his model of "egalitarianism." They are here because their "misanthropy" illustrates well his secondary theme of left-wing detachment from and contempt for ordinary lives, which he believes is at the heart of the radical greens' agenda and worldview.

For Ellis, the real problem with all these groups is not that they illustrate something fatal about the left but that they make it more difficult for the left to succeed. Seeking the millennium in the wrong way prevents the quiet, friendly confiscation and redistribution of other people's property. Ellis offers a primer on how to avoid the wrong way: Do *not* 1) engage in politically correct Manicheanism, 2) idealize the oppressed, 3) hold apocalyptic visions, 4) tolerate authoritarian or charismatic leadership, 5) attribute false consciousness to others, 6) succumb to radical certainty, 7) deny the real distinction between public and private, or 7) think that crimes are justified if you deem them "unselfish." Well, there goes the whole left!

The left has learned almost nothing from history. It has not read or listened to those who predicted the fate of the New Deal, of socialism, or of state bureaucracy. Its understanding of economics is on a par with William Jennings Bryan's understanding of Darwinian biology.

Ellis believes the political theorist Benjamin Barber has grasped the means of avoiding moral catastrophe: The left must be democrats first and egalitarians only after that. Barber, recall, thinks of the West as McDonald's, but that doesn't attribute false consciousness to anyone, does it? No contempt for ordinary lives there. From Ellis's perspective, Barber is saved by his willingness to let us be coerced only by a full 51 percent of our fellow citizens.

Richard Rorty, professor of the humanities at the University of Virginia, also wants the left to succeed, and he also has a theory about why that is not happening, which he lays out in *Achieving Our Country*. For Rorty, who has moved from analytic philosophy to skeptical pragmatism to terminal silliness, the real problem is that contempt for country and the illusion of scientific truth have led leftists away from their rightful role as "agents" into a self-defeating role as "spectators." Agents do things like organize effective coalitions to take the fruits of one person's labor or estate and give it to another person. Spectators do things like teach university courses about phallogocentric hegemonies. (This is the only good argument that I've heard in favor of courses about phallogocentric hegemonies: Better a tendentious, fatuous theorist than a thief.)

Rorty believes there was a time when the left was Whitmanesque, celebrating America, despite her faults, as a set of possibilities, and when it was imbued with the spirit of John Dewey, eschewing scientific certainties and seeking a civic consensus on what the nation could become and achieve. Marx got in the way. He had an unfortunate commitment to notions of science and historical certainty. There went Whitman's festive spirit and Dewey's democratic pragmatism.

The New Left got in the way. It could have thought of certain phenomena (slavery, Jim Crow, exploitation, Vietnam, and the like) as our "tragedies," but instead it thought of them as our "sins," which made America unforgiveable rather than something that could be transcended and achieved. This alienated people who belonged to unions and rather liked their country. There went the natural coalition between labor and academics who read Dewey.

Postmodernism got in the way. It was attracted to science, in Rorty's singular estimation. With no trace of irony, he writes that "the Foucauldian Left represents an unfortunate regression to the Marxist obsession with scientific rigor." It

spoke a jargon that put off the average working guy. It engaged in speculation instead of reformist coalition building.

Rorty's fondest hope for the species is that the "Cultural Left," which has done so much to reduce cultural "sadism" through what the defenders of the corporations call "political correctness," be united with the "Reformist Left," creating an effective coalition, just in the nick of time, to defeat the forces of "selfishness."

Why just in the nick of time? Consistent with his belief that there is no real correspondence between our "fictions" and any objective reality, Rorty asserts that 75 percent of the American people are descending into an underclass ripe for demagogic and chauvinistic totalitarianism. According to his analysis, "the average married couple, both working full time" already cannot "take home more than $30,000." If that family's "take home" versus its actual earned income—$51,000 in 1997—concerns him, he might consider lowering its taxes. Given that America provides neither public transportation nor public health insurance, "this income permits a family of four only a humiliating, hand-to-mouth existence." (He should travel more.) It will get worse. "Globalization" will drive down most people's wages in the industrialized West, and we soon will have an embittered, immiserated 75 percent of our people ruled by "the richest 25%," including "platoons of vital young entrepreneurs" who travel first-class on transatlantic jets (the horror!).

This will lead to "the formation of hereditary castes," with the ruling caste making "all the important decisions." They will buy off authors like Rorty, and readers bright enough to read him, to give the appearance of a "political class," "for the sake of keeping the proles quiet." They will get the intellectuals to devote themselves to culture. When the remaining middle class realizes that it also is going to be "downsized," however, it will refuse to be taxed "to provide benefits for anyone else," and "something will crack." Convinced that "the system has failed," voters will seek a strongman, and "a scenario like that of Sinclair Lewis's novel *It Can't Happen Here* may then be played out." Blacks, browns, women, and homosexuals will lose all of their gains, and "the words 'nigger' and 'kike' will once again be heard in the workplace." The new strongman will make his peace with the "superrich," and everyone will wonder how it happened so easily: "Where, they will ask, was the American Left?"

How might America avoid this catastrophe, and "the American Left" that damning question? First, the left must abandon theory for action. Second, it must form alliances with the patriotic labor unions, abandoning its anti-Americanism. Against selfishness, such a resurrected "American Left" would devise "a People's Charter," a list of constantly published and reiterated specific reforms, "imprinted on the memory both of professional people and of those who clean the professionals' toilets." Then we can achieve "our country."

These books unintentionally provide a partial answer to the question of why the left has fallen on such hard times. The left has learned almost nothing from history. It has not read or listened to those who predicted the fate of the New Deal, of socialism, or of state bureaucracy. Its understanding of economics is on a par with William Jennings Bryan's understanding of Darwinian biology. Its understanding of human motivation is untroubled by the world of fact and unchallenged by theories hostile to its premises.

Brinkley senses this, and he appeals to his fellow liberals to engage the traditions of those who criticize the modern so-called liberal order. Ellis seems open-minded enough, yet he poses the question of how democratic and egalitarian premises lead to authoritarian conclusions without even a soupçon of familiarity with Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, or Ronald Coase. He depicts "the Goldwater candidacy" as seeming to legitimate "the evils of segregation, the reactionary and often brutally violent resistance to civil rights for blacks, [and] the conspiratorial fantasies of the John Birch Society." He is certain that "redistributive or welfare measures are not inherently illiberal" and that we need "more today than ever before" a sharper sensitivity to "the inevitable and profound inequalities generated by capitalist mar-

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kets." Such asides aside, however, Ellis argues in good faith, mind to mind.

Rorty, by contrast, recognizes no good faith among his adversaries. The left ("by definition," he asserts) is the agent of hope, because it alone works for the redistribution of wealth, the reduction of suffering, the end of sadism, and the defeat of selfishness. Critics of the left are "part of a larger attempt to discredit all critics of the cynical oligarchy that has bought up the Republican Party." When the data of history—the productivity of free men and women, and the catastrophe of state power—contradict one's view of reality, one either changes one's view of reality or denies the very notion of reality altogether. Rorty has chosen the latter course, responding to empirical claims with "fictions."

Unlike Rorty, Brinkley and Ellis seek lessons from history. May their coalitions broaden and deepen, open as they are to data and criticism. May Rorty theorize in peace, happily detached from the problems posed by human, historical, and natural fact.

Alan Charles Kors (akors@mail.sas.upenn.edu), a professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania, is editor-in-chief of the Oxford Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment *and co-author, with Harvey A. Silverglate, of* The Shadow University: The Betrayal of Liberty on America's Campuses *(The Free Press), whose Web site is www.shadowuniv.com.*

Rebirth of Cool Cal

By John J. Miller

Coolidge: An American Enigma, by Robert Sobel, Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 462 pages, $34.95

The Presidency of Calvin Coolidge, by Robert H. Ferrell, Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 244 pages, $29.95

Star-Spangled Men: America's Ten Worst Presidents, by Nathan Miller, New York: Scribner, 272 pages, $23.00

"I believe I can swing it," deadpanned Calvin Coolidge 75 years ago, on the night that he was sworn in as president, following the sudden death of Warren Harding. Since then, however, most historians have frowned on the Republican. Several times over the last half-century, the father–son duo Arthur M. Schlesinger Sr. and Jr. have asked their fellow professors to rank America's chief executives. These academics always deem Coolidge "below average"—in other words, they think he's about as accomplished as the dithering Millard Fillmore. Cool Cal didn't do much better in a 1982 *Chicago Tribune* poll of 49 "distinguished historians"; they placed him immediately behind Jimmy Carter. In the 1997 Ridings–McIver survey of historians and former politicians, Coolidge came in at number 33, right below Richard Nixon.

The man deserves better. He is America's most underappreciated president, a tax-cutting, budget-slashing politician whose very name became synonymous with the fast-growing 1920s economy: "Coolidge Prosperity," they called it. Coolidge stood defiantly as an anti-Progressive between two activist eras, the first led by Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, the second by Franklin Delano Roosevelt. That's the real reason so many modern academics dislike him: Coolidge didn't participate in the onward march of an ever-growing government. In fact, he actively resisted it. "The people cannot look to legislation generally for success," he said in one of his most famous speeches. "Industry, thrift, character, are not conferred by act of resolve. Government cannot relieve from toil."

It's an anachronism to call Coolidge America's first libertarian president; it's also not an apt label for a politician who favored trade barriers and cut immigration levels. But perhaps this Republican comes close enough for government work. He's certainly the kind of leader the United States could use today. And now, after decades of taking partisan political knocks from New Deal court historians such as the Schlesingers, he has started to receive a much-needed reassessment in two important and level-headed books, Robert Sobel's *Coolidge: An American Enigma* and Robert H. Ferrell's *The Presidency of Calvin Coolidge.* Sobel offers a traditional biography of an often inscrutable man; Ferrell focuses almost exclusively on Coolidge's presidential administration. Both efforts are welcome.

The Coolidge years marked a transitional time for the United States, with technological advances improving the lives of ordinary citizens in dramatic ways. While he was president, automobile registrations tripled and phone ownership grew rapidly. The first suburbs appeared, and skyscrapers began to dot the urban landscape. Motion pictures suddenly played sound; they became known as the "talkies," and theater attendance skyrocketed. Charles Lindbergh flew across the Atlantic Ocean, exciting imaginations everywhere.

Coolidge himself seemed to stand on the cusp of the modern era, a mixture of old and new. He was the last president who never flew in an airplane. He didn't own a car until he left office, and even then he didn't drive it. Yet he was a radio pioneer. The new medium—it broadcast a political convention for the first time in 1924, when Coolidge was renominated by the GOP—allowed him to overcome his lifelong handicap as a crummy stump speaker. ("McCall could fill any hall in Massachusetts and Coolidge could empty it," wrote one critic, referring to Coolidge's

candidacy for lieutenant governor and his ticket mate, Samuel McCall, in 1916.) His reedy voice, in fact, was ideal for the airwaves; he delivered 16 radio addresses in five years.

Although he instinctively recoiled from the glad-handing that most successful politicians thrive on—no fraternity at Amherst College would accept him when he first rushed—Coolidge embodied a very genuine kind of populism that the age of electronic media would soon destroy. He was, for example, the last president to write his own speeches or spend a significant amount of time in the traditional activity of greeting anonymous White House visitors and passers-by with a quick handshake. He was also the first president to hold regular press conferences with newspaper reporters, although he insisted that most of these meetings be off the record.

Instead of trying to tinker with the economy or control emerging industries with new rules of conduct, Coolidge had the basic good sense to leave well enough alone. "It is much more important to kill bad bills than to pass good ones," he said early in his career, and these words animated much of his public life, especially his presidency. One of his important achievements was helping defeat a popular crop subsidy bill which would have encouraged farmers to increase production and demand more government support in an escalating spiral of dependency. Coolidge mocked social engineers—including his own commerce secretary, Herbert Hoover, who would succeed him in 1929—as "world beaters" and "wonder boys."

Between 1923 and 1928, Coolidge's first year and last full year in office, he accomplished a feat that seems unbelievable at the end of the century: Federal spending didn't increase. It remained steady at $3.3 billion, even though military expenditures rose slightly. "The Coolidge era was a time of small government, evident in the nearly complete lack of federal social programs," writes Ferrell. Furthermore, regulation "was thin to the point of invisibility." The number of federal employees crept upward from 537,000 to 561,000 under Coolidge's watch, but most of this hiring was by the Post Office, which was trying to keep up with a growing population. Among Washington bureaucrats, the federal payroll actually dropped from 70,000 to 65,000.

Coolidge managed to cut taxes several times and in several ways. He was especially eager to reduce the income tax burden on top earners, in the belief that freeing their capital for investment would help ordinary workers. He didn't call it "trickle-down economics," but that's what he meant. He also thought a stronger national economy propelled by reduced taxes would help the government's bottom line. "I am convinced that the larger incomes of the country would actually yield more revenue to the government if the basis of taxation were scientifically revised downward," he said in his 1924 State of the Union address. Congress always fought him on the cuts, but Coolidge successfully pushed for a series of reductions. Government receipts stayed even at $3.9 billion during his tenure, bearing out his belief that higher tax rates do not necessarily generate higher revenue.

Coolidge had the basic good sense to leave well enough alone. "It is much more important to kill bad bills than to pass good ones," he said early in his career, and these words animated much of his public life, especially his presidency.

This doesn't mean that today's supply-siders should claim Coolidge as an early member of their club. He was a fierce budget hawk who consistently used revenue surpluses to pay down the national debt, which mushroomed during World War I. "While I am exceedingly interested in having tax reduction," he said in 1927, "it can only be brought about as a result of economy, and therefore it seems to me

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that the Chamber of Commerce and all others that are interested in tax reduction ought to be first of all bending their energies to see that no unwise expenditures are authorized by the government, and that every possible effort is put forth to keep our expenditures down, and pay off our debt, so that we can have tax reduction."

As much as Coolidge disliked high taxes, he considered a large national debt an even greater evil. Retiring it was "the predominant necessity of the country," he said, "the very largest internal improvement... possible to conceive." During his presidency, the debt shrank more than 20 percent, from $22.3 billion to $17.6 billion.

This animus toward debt grew out of Coolidge's personal frugality, which was legendary. When enemies tried to smear Coolidge by linking him to the Harding administration's corrupt Teapot Dome scheme, the simple and obvious fact that he didn't live in high style served as a ready witness. Early in his career, Coolidge refused to accept a salary higher than the one his office received on election day. He didn't own a home until after he was president. For most of his political career he rented a seven-room duplex in Northampton, Massachusetts, moving out of it only when his quasi-celebrity status as an ex-president drove him to seek more privacy. Coolidge wasn't a scrooge; he just believed in living honestly and within his means. When a cosmetics company approached the former president about having his wife, Grace, give an endorsement for a large sum, Coolidge wrote back, Sorry, she doesn't use your product. The novelist Charles McCarry tells an old family story about Coolidge as ex-president. On a summer day, Coolidge borrowed a match from McCarry's grandfather in Northampton. That fall, they bumped into each other again on Main Street. Coolidge said, "Hello, Will, here's the match I owe you," and handed a brand-new kitchen match to an astonished recipient.

Silent Cal: Accused of doing "less work than any other American president," Coolidge had his defenders, too. "The country remembers only the grateful fact that he let it alone," eulogized H.L. Mencken.

Coolidge learned these virtues growing up in the remote hamlet of Plymouth Notch, Vermont. Two presidents have died on Independence Day (Adams and Jefferson), but Coolidge is the only one to have been born on it: July 4, 1872. His storekeeping father sacrificed much to put his single son through Black River Academy and Amherst College, and then to send remittances as Coolidge studied for the bar and set up his law office in Northampton. Sobel reports that Coolidge even received this financial assistance at the age of 34, following his marriage and the birth of his first son—something that must have gnawed at the man who once remarked, "Anybody who is not capable of supporting himself is not fit for self-government."

Coolidge won 19 of 20 races for public office, starting with an 1898 campaign for the Northampton City Council. He worked his way up the political ladder in Massachusetts with a striking deliberateness, moving first into the state legislature, next heading the state senate, then becoming lieutenant governor, and finally rising to governor. Like many Republicans during these years, Coolidge was something of a Progressive, supporting minimum wage laws, a six-day work week, women's suffrage, and the direct election of senators. Part of this was sincere—few political figures were immune to the Progressive bug in the first part of the century—but much of it also grew from Coolidge's impulse to win broad constituencies. Before there were Reagan Democrats, notes Sobel, there were Coolidge Democrats. Moreover, Coolidge wanted to repair the breach in the GOP that erupted in 1912 when Theodore Roosevelt bolted the party and helped Woodrow Wilson win an election with only a plurality of the vote.

Coolidge had stuck with the doomed incumbent, President William Howard Taft, but held no grudges. He could mix with Progressives and occasionally might even govern like one. At bottom, however, he was the last Republican president to hark back to the party's pre-Progressive roots in any significant way. All his life Coolidge was a consummate party builder, even reaching across racial lines when it wasn't a popular thing to do: In an unusual political decision for a president in 1924, he gave the commencement address to the all-black Howard University.

In 1920, the GOP tapped Gov. Coolidge to run for vice president alongside Ohio Sen. Warren Harding. Coolidge had risen to national prominence a year earlier for his handling of a police strike in Boston, when he forthrightly supported firing the strikers. "There is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, anytime," he declared, in words that made him almost a household name. The Harding–Coolidge ticket went on to beat Democrats James Cox and FDR.

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Wags called the 1920 race a "kangaroo election" because the hind legs (vice presidential candidates Coolidge and Roosevelt) were stronger than the front ones.

Coolidge was a serendipitous choice. Republican Party bosses probably would have dumped him for another candidate in 1924 (a common practice at the time). Instead, he became an accidental president and then easily won an election in his own right. (He would have coasted to victory again in 1928, but decided to retire instead.) As a man of uncommon moral character, Coolidge appeared on the national scene at precisely the right moment. The ethics of his immediate predecessor, Warren Harding, are best described as Clintonesque: a reckless personal life compounded by a bevy of home-state friends who conspired to enrich themselves at public expense. Harding was enormously popular when he died, but postmortem revelations about his personal life and the behavior of his political appointees might have done lasting damage to the office of the presidency if it hadn't been for Coolidge's confident and careful leadership.

Despite all of this, Nathan Miller ranks Coolidge the seventh-worst president in his entertaining but unreliable book *Star-Spangled Men: America's Ten Worst Presidents.* His chief allegation against Coolidge is that he "did less work than any other American president in history"—i.e., he didn't create some big government program as his legacy. He also accuses Coolidge of not preventing the Depression, which would strike less than a year after he left office. There's some fairness to this charge—in 1928, Coolidge made the unfortunate statement that he "wouldn't happen to know anything about" how the Federal Reserve Board sets interest rates—but quite a bit of unfairness, too. Economic historians today still aren't entirely sure what caused the Depression and what might have been done to prevent it. Why must Coolidge shoulder the blame for not predicting what the so-called experts still can't figure out nearly 70 years later?

But Miller's errors are even more egregious. He denigrates Coolidge as a man who did not possess "a wide-ranging mind," but several pages later acknowledges that Coolidge translated Dante's *Inferno* into English. It makes one wonder how Miller spends his own free time. Certainly not studying Coolidge's own writings and speeches: Miller misquotes one of his target's best-known remarks, recasting the statement "The chief business of the American people is business" as "The business of America is business." He seems entirely ignorant of what the speech was really about—the importance of a free press—and totally unaware of the moral context in which Coolidge framed his remarks. In the same talk, he said: "It is only those who do not understand our people, who believe our national life is entirely absorbed by mate-

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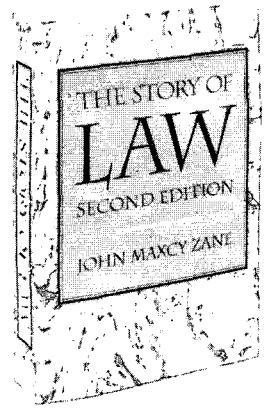

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John M. Zane (1863–1937) was a distinguished attorney.

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rial motives. We make no concealment of the fact that we want wealth, but there are many other things we want much more," including peace, honor, charity, and idealism. Miller's scholarly sloppiness is inexcusable, but hardly uncommon. As Thomas Silver revealed in his 1982 book *Coolidge and the Historians*, the 30th president has received fundamentally unfair treatment almost from the day he left office.

Historian Richard Norton Smith says presidents who are rated as outstanding tend to be those who supplied great conflict and drama; whether they actually advanced the interests of their country is a secondary concern. The famously quiet Coolidge certainly wasn't a dramatic figure. He had none of the delusions of grandeur that have afflicted so many other presidents, and may have been the humblest person ever to occupy the office. He performed his job sensibly and well. A neighbor once remarked that "Calvin never takes a chance and strikes out, and never hits a home run. A base hit is his limit. He'll make that every time." But like a shortstop who hits .300, always puts the ball in play, and doesn't make many errors, he's a valuable veteran, if often overlooked.

When Coolidge died in 1933, some of his severest critics reflected on his time in office with a fondness they didn't have for him when he served. The poison-penned H.L. Mencken wrote these generous words: "He begins to seem, in retrospect, an extremely comfortable and even praiseworthy citizen. His failings are forgotten; the country remembers only the grateful fact that he let it alone. Well, there are worse epitaphs for a statesman. If the day ever comes when Jefferson's warnings are heeded at last, and we reduce government to its simplest terms, it may very well happen that Cal's bones now resting inconspicuously in the Vermont granite will come to be revered as those of a man who really did the nation some service." The new books by Sobel and Ferrell should encourage the sort of re-evaluation that Mencken had in mind. It's about time.

Contributing Editor John J. Miller (millerjj @aol.com) is a political reporter for National Review *and author of* The Unmaking of Americans: How Multiculturalism Has Undermined America's Assimilation Ethic *(The Free Press).*

Secrets of Success

By Joel Mokyr

Conquests and Cultures: An International History, by Thomas Sowell, New York: Basic Books, 493 pages, $35.00

Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies, by Jared Diamond, New York: Norton, 480 pages, $27.50

Global economic history is "in" again. Along with the two books reviewed here, I could mention David Landes's *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, Richard Easterlin's *Growth Triumphant*, Robert McC. Adams's *Paths of Fire*, and Patrick Verley's *L'échelle du Monde*. More are on the way. All of these books are trying, in one way or another, to answer the question posed by Thomas Sowell: Why does 17 percent of the world produce four-fifths of its output? A more elegant way of raising the same issue is what Jared Diamond calls "Yali's question." Yali is a New Guinea notable who one day asks Diamond why white people have so much "cargo"—Western manufactured goods desired by New Guineans —while New Guinea produces no cargo of interest to Westerners.

Everyone understands that these questions can never be answered in a definitive way, comparable to proving Fermat's Last Theorem. The distribution of prosperity is hopelessly "overdetermined": There are far too many answers that all seem to be right. Culture, geography, institutions, war, religion, and even historical accidents all seem to have played a role. But *what* role, and which factors are most important, remain matters of controversy.

Thomas Sowell's *Conquests and Cultures* is the third volume of a trilogy, preceded by *Race and Culture* and *Migrations and Cultures*. Sowell, a noted economist and social commentator at Stanford's Hoover Institution, raises the interesting issue of what happens when two culturally and economically different societies clash militarily and one of them "conquers" the other. Using this general framework, he analyzes four historical cases in which conquest played a major role: England, Africa, the Slavic people, and the Western Hemisphere Indians. These chapters show that conquests do not have much in common, yielding a somewhat confused picture. In Africa, conquest led to slavery for a large proportion of the population; in the Western Hemisphere, to the physical destruction of much of the indigenous population; in Eastern Europe, where conquerors and conquered changed positions over time, to an unstable and variable clash of cultures.

Conquests come in many forms, from the long-term occupations of the Romans in the Mediterranean to the short-lived mega-empires of Tamerlane. Some of them led to a forced or voluntary assimilation of the conquered to the language and customs of the victors, but in other cases the reverse occurred (for example, the Roman conquest of Greece or the Mongol conquests of China). Sowell points out that being conquered often led to a long-term increase in living standards and economic performance, and in some cases when the occupiers withdrew (as the Romans did from Britain in the fifth century) the occupied countries sank into poverty and barbarism. In Sowell's view, exploitation and theft do not go nearly as

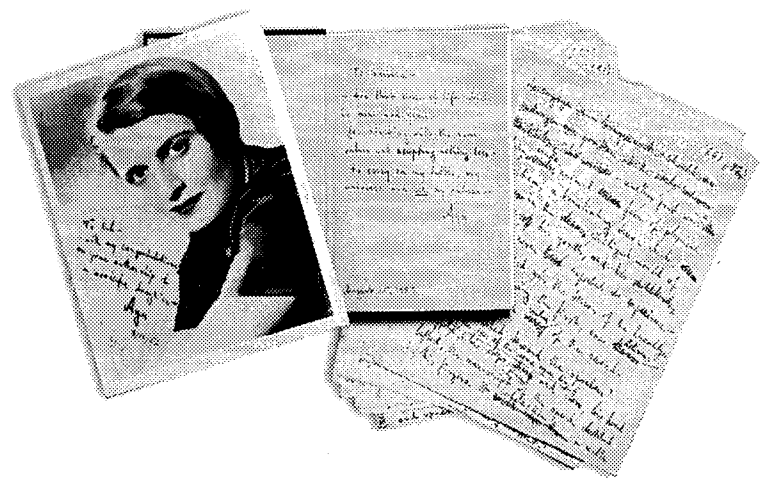
far in explaining economic differences as culturally caused differences in productivity.

The key concept in Sowell's view of history is "cultural capital," which is transferred and diffused among societies. The concept is nowhere defined with any precision, and at times it seems to be interchangeable with "human capital," though Sowell uses that term rather loosely as well, often more in the sense of *mentalité* and social institutions than in the sense employed by economists (an economically useful formal education). Yet his overall view of history is quite clear: People are born with very similar innate abilities, but their economic achievements differ enormously due to differences in "cultural capital," which determines not only such matters as technological sophistication but also "attitudes" such as diligence, honesty, and ambition. For Sowell, the most important form of cultural capital is freedom, which is Britain's gift to the world. Free markets and the aggressive pursuit of economic success within them are the central answers to Yali's question.

The question of why and how these ideas caught on or did not occupies the bulk of *Conquests and Cultures.* Some of the themes announced at the start, especially the effects of "conquest," are lost in the shuffle, and when the reader puts the book down, its basic message remains fuzzy. What is clear is that, much like David Landes, Sowell believes that Western culture and values hold the key to economic progress. His knowledge of economic history, unfortunately, cannot hold a candle to Landes's, and because of his very cursory discussion of the key elements in this story, the book will probably only preach to the converted and irritate the skeptics.

This is not to say that *Conquests and Cultures* has no valuable messages. Sowell points out that statements about general characteristics of a large group (ethnic, racial, religious) are not necessarily inadmissible if these groups share a culture or an environment that might affect their traits. Essentialism (the notion that groups share certain inherent traits), fervently denounced by politically correct scholars, is not the same as racism. Sowell also points to the dynamic role played in economic history by population movements and minorities, perhaps not a novel insight but worth stressing. At times immigrants and minorities enriched the local inhabitants with their culture and knowledge; in other cases they were the winners.

Sowell surely will annoy some pious liberals by noting that the lighter the skin color of American blacks, the higher their scores on tests of intelligence "and other social qualities." This, he proclaims, is not a subjective perception or a stereotype but a fact. The explanation is that the lighter-skinned group had "earlier and better access to higher levels of European culture."



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Location, Location, Location?: Where Thomas Sowell suggests that "cultural capital" matters most in determining which societies prosper, Jared Diamond argues that geography is destiny.

Without, of course, endorsing oppression and slavery, Sowell argues that the more Africans (in either hemisphere) had contact with European culture, the better off they were economically.

Even more courageously, Sowell admonishes us to examine seriously racist theories that correlate genetics with achievement. While these theories are incorrect, he says, something useful can be learned from the conversation with racists, and blanket dismissals are uncalled for. For instance, biological differences between races may exist even if they are not caused by genes: Norwegians are taller than the Japanese (and Americans are fatter than anyone else), but this is primarily due to environmental and nutritional differences, not genetics.

As a work of scholarship, unfortunately, Sowell's book is broad rather than deep. Although the book contains an amazingly large number of notes (1,626, to be exact), they point mostly to textbooks, atlases, works of reference, and well-known (usually dated) syntheses. Of course, nobody can be an expert on the huge literature of any of the four cases that Sowell analyzes, let alone all four. All the same, the net result is that many of his chapters read like potted histories, distilled from the secondary literature.

At least for the small subset of Sowell's material on which I can claim some expertise, the research behind this book does not inspire confidence. The small section on the British Industrial Revolution seems to have evaded every important book written on the subject in the past two decades. Sowell's pitiful survey of Ireland, seemingly a superb case through which his theories about the effects of conquest on the diffusion of cultural capital could be tested, contains the howler that the dire poverty of the Irish in the early 19th century is indicated by a life expectancy of 19 years.

The actual number is probably twice as high (see Cormac Ó Gráda's *Ireland Before and After the Famine,* 1993, page 18). And unbeknownst to Sowell, modern research has discovered that the Irish were taller than their English contemporaries, indicating that measures of "poverty" and "backwardness" are ambiguous. In a brief section supposed to explain how "religion played important roles in the secular development of the world," Sowell somehow fails to mention either Max Weber or Lynn White. My point is not to nitpick on one or two errors so much as to point out that in books such as this one no reader knows the "topic" as a whole; if a reviewer finds glaring errors and poor coverage in an area in which he has some expertise, his confidence in the rest of the story is inevitably reduced.

Jared Diamond's book, *Guns, Germs, and Steel,* shares with Sowell's the premise that all nations and ethnic groups possess the potential for economic success, even if that potential is not realized to the same degree everywhere. Otherwise, the two books are quite different. Diamond is a professor of physiology at UCLA's medical school whose range marks him as one of the true Renaissance scholars of our time. He is also a highly original thinker whose scholarship in many areas is sound and reliable. This book, honored recently with a Pulitzer Prize, is mandatory reading for anyone who purports to engage big questions in the area of long-term global history.

Diamond, to put it bluntly, is a geographical determinist. The shape and location of continents, original flora and fauna, microbes, water, climate, topography—all are truly exogenous to history. The rest is endogenous. Geography, of course, has a terrible reputation in historical explanation. Landes, in his *Wealth and Poverty,* starts off by recounting how geography departments were closed around the country without a tear; he notes that "no other discipline has been so depreciated and disparaged." Simple-minded explanations that submit that "Britain had an Industrial Revolution because it had coal" have long been abandoned.

Yet before we dismiss Diamond's book as another simplistic tale, we have to face the fact that he knows his stuff inside out, to the point where any thought of using the adjective *crude* (traditionally preceding *determinist*) evaporates as we turn the pages. Diamond fires off a barrage of facts and observations based on half a dozen disciplines, from archeology to botany to linguistics. He argues that the world's population bifurcated for geographical reasons. Once the different paths were

established, "Eurasia" diverged from Africa and America more and more through positive feedback effects, in which geography fed into technology and technology fed into power structures and culture, which fed back into technology and growth, until we got a world of Western economic hegemony.

Diamond emphasizes that human wealth and success depend on interaction with the environment. Economic history, in his view, is a game against nature, not primarily a social process. Production, especially in agriculture, depends on the geographical hand we have been dealt. Yet Diamond, unlike most geographers, focuses not on soil fertility and minerals but on the ability of humans to domesticate plants and animals. Unlike Sowell, he says all societies and cultures initially had similar abilities to manipulate nature, but their raw materials were different.

To exploit large animals for food, energy, or other uses, you need domesticable wild animals, something that did not exist in pre-Columbian America (where the arrival of *Homo sapiens* 13,000 years ago apparently led to their extinction). Such animals have to satisfy certain conditions: They must be able to breed in captivity, they must be safe around children, and so on. Diamond lists five major species of large, domesticable animal species—cows, goats, sheep, pigs, and horses—and nine minor ones, including reindeer, yaks, and llamas. Of these 14, only one was native to South America (llamas and their close cousins, alpacas) and none to North America.

Diamond argues persuasively that the hippos and giraffes of Africa, the jaguars of the Amazon, and the kangaroos of Australia were not domesticable. He says the domesticated llamas, alpacas, turkeys, and dogs of America could not pull it off either. North America's other large herbivorous mammals all turned out to be nondomesticable. Eurasia, on the other hand, was lucky enough to have the wild animals from which our cows, sheep, horses, and chickens could be bred. This gave the Europeans huge advantages not only in the development of technology (mixed farming and wheeled transport, for example) but also in resistance to infection, providing them with immunity against diseases caused by proximity to domestic animals. When Europeans traveled to other continents, the infectious diseases they carried overwhelmed the natives.

Eurasia was also lucky to have a much larger stock of plants that lent themselves to domestication. Eurasian plants were more nutritious, easier to cultivate, and more resistant to disease. Botanical wealth, says Diamond, determined agriculture, and agriculture determined everything else. Eurasia won because its supply of wild plants, which provided the gene pool for domesticated crops, was larger, richer, and better. If you think this explanation is simplistic, read the chapters on "How to Make an Almond" and "Apples and Indians."

Diamond realizes, of course, that the Americas contained a considerable number of highly nutritious crops, many of which were transplanted successfully to Eurasia after 1500. Yet he maintains that because of diverse climates and the narrow connection between North and South America, such crops did not proliferate as readily as in Eurasia. Doubts begin to emerge here: Corn and potatoes are hardy plants that grow in a wide variety of conditions, and Diamond never quite nails down the reason for their failure to spread earlier and more widely in pre-Columbian times.

Perhaps, as Diamond seems to believe, they would have, had there been more time. Had Columbus arrived a millennium or two later, North America might have been a very different society. Surprisingly, Diamond says little about the potential of the lowly potato, which merits only cursory mentions in his book even though it radically transformed the societies in which it was adopted. Such doubts notwithstanding, this is a serious, informed, and well-thought-out argument. If in the end we are not wholly convinced, thinking of how to refute Diamond will make us wiser.

How much of the performance of non-Europeans was constrained by their environment, and how much was their own making? In Diamond's view, the answers are "all" and "none." But this is by no

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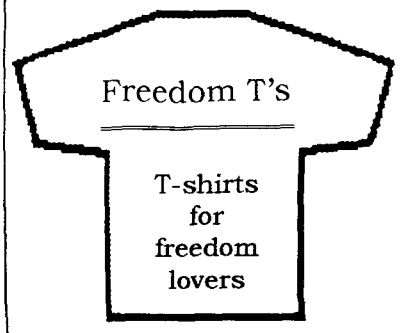

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means clear. For example, Diamond says one of the disadvantages encountered by the indigenous people of what is now the eastern United States was a lack of wild plants that could be turned into crops. Yet he concedes that some native species might have done nicely. He describes sumpweed, with 32 percent protein, as "a nutritionist's ultimate dream." He explains that the flower did not make it to the rank of corn, potatoes, and rye because it causes hayfever, smells bad, and can cause skin irritation. Are we sure that these vices *could* not have been bred out of sumpweed, just because they *were* not? All domesticated plants originally had undesirable characteristics, but through deliberate and lucky selection mechanisms they eventually got over them. Wheat, rye, and maize, which feed much of the world's population, all had humble beginnings.

To be fair, Diamond's argument is not entirely ex post. He points out that our ability to improve plants depended largely on whether the code for certain characteristics was carried by more than one gene. People could select for a particular trait as long as it was caused by one or very few genes; if it was controlled by many genes, breeding specimens that displayed the trait would be unlikely to fix it in the population. Diamond offers a few examples, but he does not persuade me that this problem was especially pronounced in the societies he identifies as geographically challenged.

There is a similar weakness in Diamond's view of technology. In a chapter cleverly named "Necessity's Mother," he notes the many links between geographical constraints and technical options. Why would a society produce wheels if it had no horses or oxen to pull them? Wheelbarrows and rickshaws might have been an option, but maybe draft animals came first. Not all questions can be answered this way: Some indigenous populations in America might have built seaworthy ships, or managed to develop a technology we cannot imagine today. If they did not, is this because they tried and failed, or because they never tried?

When all is said and done, the overdetermined nature of the issue remains: There are many explanations for the observed gaps in income and economic success, and they all make sense; they all are consistent with the evidence. Our models of history, however, are still unable to rank them by importance or assign weights to them.

Diamond offers two reasons to believe that links between geography and technological progress may be significant. One is that geography constrains mobility of knowledge. Assume, somewhat implausibly, that the idea of a wheelbarrow occurred to just one person in history, but that it spread to people seeing their neighbors use one. If this happened in Central Asia, it may well have reached China, France, and Yemen within a few centuries, but before 1500 it would never have gotten to America or Australia. And Diamond notes that agricultural technology diffuses more easily from east to west than from north to south, since changing longitude has a stronger effect on climate and seasonality than changing latitude—giving Eurasia an advantage over America and Africa.

Diamond also resurrects the late Julian Simon's argument that technological success often depends on population density and the ability of a society to produce a surplus beyond subsistence, so that there are resources available for tinkering and experimenting. Maximum population density was largely a function of the environment's ability to feed people. Writing, for instance, required large and dense settlements with complex hierarchical institutions, much different from hunting and gathering tribes.

The notion that much of economic history is a game against nature, in which people form certain views about its regularities and use these to manipulate their environment and improve their material conditions, is a powerful one. Diamond's insight is that nature differs from place to place and that certain environments are easier to manipulate than others.

The economic historian must add two qualifications to this. First, environments can be manipulated or abandoned. While Diamond describes in detail prehistoric population movements (which he deduces from linguistic evidence), he does not realize that he tells the story of regions, not necessarily of people living there, who always had the option of moving to a more generous and flexible area. Second, it could be argued that much technology emerges precisely because the environment is not generous and requires hard work and ingenuity. It is here that Sowell's "cultural capital" comes in, directing us to another important set of variables. The difference between the two approaches is that in Diamond's account culture itself is determined by location: Geography truly is destiny.

How can we be sure? We cannot. When all is said and done, the overdetermined nature of the issue remains: There are many explanations for the observed gaps in income and economic success, and they all make sense; they all are consistent with the evidence. Our models of history, however, are still unable to rank them by importance or assign weights to them. Is culture really determined by geography, as Diamond thinks, or is technological success above all a rebellion against the dictates of the environment? If everything in global history is interrelated with everything else, who can blame our students for being bewildered? After all, Fermat's Last Theorem took three centuries to prove, and this problem is a lot harder.

Joel Mokyr (j-mokyr@nwu.edu), a professor of economics and history at Northwestern University, is the author of The Lever of Riches *(Oxford University Press).*

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By Loren Lomasky

September was hard on quarterbacks. During the very first week of the NFL season no fewer than seven were injured. And in Week 2 superstars John Elway and Troy Aikman went out in the same game. But no quarterback took more blows than the nation's commander-in-chief. Following a series of leaks that would have sunk Noah came the official release of the Starr report, then the citizenry's rush to Internet search engines to cut through the boring parts and jump to the good stuff, and finally the grand jury video. Commentators had a field day.

Some saw in Clinton's activities a train of impeachable offenses, while his "supporters" declared the president's conduct to be reprehensible but on the right side of what the Constitution characterizes as a high crime—or a misdemeanor. That his behavior had been disgraceful was conceded by all parties, nor was there any serious question concerning whether he had stretched the truth like a Spandex bodysuit on a Sumo wrestler. Republicans, of course, launched an all-out blitz, but even Democrat congressmen who could have been expected to take up the position of protective linemen instead eased gingerly off the field. Even if the president had not perpetrated an impeachable offense, suggested some, he had forfeited the moral authority to lead the nation.

I have no wish to plumb the fine points of impeachment law. I suspect there aren't any. This is a flivver that has not been taken out of the garage since the time of Andrew Johnson (although it might have been an appropriate vehicle for his namesake, Lyndon), so precedent can offer precious little clarification of the Constitution's terse provisions. All the players are making it up as they go. So too shall I. But as a spectator with no stake in the game other than that shared by all American citizens, I should like to offer a muffled cheer for the chief executive.

President Clinton cannot have forfeited his leadership capacities because, although he is a man of formidable capacities, leadership has never been in his play book. To lead is to possess a conception of the destination to be sought and a concomitant willingness to bear whatever hardships are required to pursue that course. Under no plausible rendering is Clinton a leader in this sense. If he is spotted in any line of marchers, it is because he saw it forming and scurried to take a place at its head. Once its progress slows in the face of opposition, he nimbly repositions himself to where obstacles are fewer.

His whole career gives evidence of this protean propensity, not least the years of the presidency. The Bible on which he took his oath of office had barely cooled before he found it expedient to back away from his pledge to eliminate barriers to gays in the military. The middle-class tax cut disappeared almost as quickly as did proposed appointees or cabinet members who ran into media flak. The Republicans stormed to a congressional majority, and he promptly announced that the era of big government is over. And so on.

Clinton's role model, we are told, is John F. Kennedy. It does not take a rocket scientist—or even a political scientist—to discover in the Starr revelations further Kennedy parallels, admittedly of a more prurient than presidential nature. However, the two men are separated by a gulf wider than the distance between Boston and Little Rock. Kennedy was a risk taker. He announced in his inaugural address a willingness to "pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty." Before his life was snuffed out, Kennedy manifested this resolution by going toe-to-toe with Khrushchev over missiles in Cuba, pledging an enduring commitment to the citizens of divided Berlin, and building up troop levels in that previously obscure map blip, Vietnam. Around this time Clinton was prepping for a political career and discovering in himself a new zeal for conscientious objection.

This president does not bear burdens; rather he professes to feel your pain. Taken literally, this is an absurdity. Pain is intrinsically private; any pain one feels is, definitionally, one's own. But the metaphor is wonderfully evocative. It conveys a willingness to be directed by the feelings of others rather than one's own conceptions. It is the antithesis of autonomy. Moreover, it bespeaks maximal inoffensiveness, for who would harm another if that person's resultant pain would be one's own?

I DID NOT HAVE SEXUAL RELATIONS WITH THAT WOMAN, MS. LEWINSKY...
I'M NOT TWIDDLING MY THUMBS AS SADDAM BUILDS WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION...
I WON'T LET SLOBODAN MILOSEVIC'S SERBS CONTINUE TO KILL CIVILIANS IN KOSOVO...
I WISH HE'D CONFINE HIS LYING TO SEX.
MIKE LUCKOVICH

MIKE LUCKOVICH

The philosopher Baruch Spinoza held that common to all entities, from chunks of matter to chief executives, was *conatus*, an inherent drive to maintain their integrity. Absent this urge, things would disintegrate. But although everything possesses this drive, Clinton is unique as an instance of pure conation. He will do whatever is required to hold himself together. No principles or ideals or moral scruples are allowed to get in the way of this self-protective impulse. Not heroic, to be sure. If Clinton is found on a PT boat, one can be sure that it is securely docked.

But hewing to a path of least resistance has its charms too, especially in the case of one who has at his finger the immense resources of the world's remaining superpower. Under Clinton's watch there have been more outbreaks of sexual sleaze and financial peccadillo than can be counted on a standard-issue abacus, but there has been no Caribbean derring-do and no Vietnams. For this surcease of travail the American public is demonstrably grateful.

Its initial endorsement of Clinton for the nation's highest office was offered in a context of repeated bimbo eruptions and gossip about financial coups that weren't strictly kosher. Four years later, "Whitewater" had entered the American lexicon, Paula Jones was in the process of being outed, and professional investors were agog with envy at the First Lady's ability to transform $1,000 into $100,000 via commodity futures prestidigitation. No matter; he was handsomely re-elected.

And today, even in the wake of Judge Starr's tales of misuse of tobacco products and associated Oval Office derelictions, poll results consistently reveal the public's support for continuation of the Clinton presidency. According to the rules of the democracy game, the people are entitled to select their quarterback. Their disinclination to bench Clinton is compelling.

Compelling, but perhaps not definitive. If Clinton has either committed or suborned perjury, then it may be necessary for Congress to second-guess the judgment of the citizenry. Concerning such technical determinations the lawyers will have to be heard. One need not have any special training in the law, however, to realize that not every failure to relate the truth, the

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whole truth, and nothing but the truth properly results in a perjury indictment. If every witness who disingenuously declares himself "unable to recall" some crucial event were brought up on charges, casualties of the War on Perjury would be even more extensive than those of the War on Drugs. Perjury prosecutions must be selective, extended only to those whose lies are especially egregious in evincing disrespect for the law.

Late-show wits, as well as less-celebrated speakers of the English language, have made sport of Clinton's improbable semantic slides. Not even in the most recherché salons of postmodernism does "sexual relations" carry the significance that the president ascribed to it in his testimony. Like Humpty Dumpty, he insists that words have no meaning until he gives them one. This is dubious linguistics, and those who prize literacy have ample reason to be aggrieved by his solecisms. But an aesthetic offense ought not be confused with a legal one. Clinton's tortured usages reveal a doggedly earnest inclination to stay within the confines of the literal text of the perjury statutes.

As he candidly admitted in his taped grand jury testimony, his intention was to reveal as little as possible concerning his dalliances with Monica Lewinsky while never overstepping the boundary separating culpable lying from mere sophistry. If he nonetheless crossed that line, the trespass was inadvertent rather than deliberate. Indeed, so assiduous was Clinton in his efforts to stay within the law, that he modulated the form of activity in which they engaged so that, if worst came to worst, he would be able to deny the existence of sexual relations (in his curious sense of the term).

Those who say that it was reckless of Clinton to become such good friends with the girl in the beret are, of course, correct. Yet it was a disarmingly temperate recklessness; Monica Lewinsky would be allowed to wield the presidential gavel but not beyond the confines of the presidential definition. Not even the urgency of lowering his trousers was allowed to annul the overriding imperative that the Clinton derriere be kept covered.

Frankly, I am not sure that Clinton is capable of committing perjury. To perjure oneself is to lie, and lying is, minimally, affirming that which one knows not to be the case and thereby representing oneself as believing that which was affirmed. (The latter clause is to distinguish lying from telling a joke or reporting the contents of campaign speech.)

Lying can exist only within a context of general truth-telling, for if it were not typically the intention of speakers to convey their belief that *X* when they utter the sentence "*X*," they could not act to deceive listeners by saying "*X*" when they believe that *not-X*. It is by no means obvious, though, that this is the context within which Clintonspeak operates. Rather than deploying language as a vehicle for expressing truths, Clinton will say whatever he deems best suited to serve his interests.

Thus, all that can legitimately be inferred from one of his remarks is that saying it is more useful than not saying it. No belief imputations are licit, and so he cannot be accused of representing himself as affirming that which he in fact knows to be false. Admittedly, this analysis is speculative, but perhaps it creates enough elbow room for reasonable doubt.

Congressional interrogators bent on pursuing impeachment will have to supply justifications of their attempt to bench this quarterback. These, predictably, will be complex and verbose. Voters, though, are at liberty to cast their ballots any way they want for any reason they want. There is, then, an articulation gap between solons and citizens. Pundits and pollsters earn their paychecks by professing clairvoyance concerning what is on the mind of the voting public. We have good reason to swallow their analyses with a healthy pinch of salt. I too have hunches concerning the electorate's stubborn fidelity to the Clinton presidency, and like others in the public domain it comes without warranty. So much by way of disclaimers; now the punditry.

Voters may support a candidate because they believe once in office he will do them some good. Alternatively, they may stand behind a candidate because they believe he will do less harm than the available alternatives. Harm avoiders are especially attractive when times are good. By any reckoning this side of the Michigan Militia, times are indeed good in 1990s America. The nation is the solitary colossus bestriding the world; we are at peace; economic growth is vigorous and noninflationary; unemployment rests at essentially the zero level; the federal budget has entered the terra incognita of surplus.

Could things be yet better? Undoubtedly. It would be an extravagant effusion of optimism, however, to suppose that any of the presidential aspirants on offer would preside over that greater good. Mucking up is the more likely outcome. When you're on a winning roll it is folly to change the dice, and the American public has the good sense not to expect more from their political overseers than is currently being served up. If the cost of prosperity is a president lacking the traditional moral virtues, so be it.

The Starr inquiries have wounded Clinton. But they do not necessarily diminish his presidential utility. When dogs are whipped, sometimes they turn on their tormentor and bite. But others will grovel fulsomely, showing themselves all the more eager to please. This president is learning every trick he can to restore affections and ingratiate himself with the citizenry that employs him. If previously he was eager to please, slavishness now has become an obsession. Is this a man likely to reinvent himself as an adventurer? I think not. That isn't to say that Clintonism will always be in style. If Japan Inc. goes into receivership, Russia descends further into anarchy, or Alan Greenspan loses his magic touch at the Fed, the public is likely to reconsider. When winning streaks give way to snake eyes, it will call for a genuine leader, someone who conveys conviction, determination, a sense of knowing what needs to be done to escape the rut.

Such moods paved the way for the ascendency of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. Lest we forget, it also delivered a dispirited Weimar Republic into the embrace of Adolf Hitler. It will be time enough to ponder the prospects and perils of assertive leadership when peace and prosperity enter into eclipse. In the meantime I join the sideline chant: Let Clinton be Clinton! ◆

Contributing Editor Loren Lomasky (llomask@opie.bgsu.edu) teaches philosophy at Bowling Green State University and is author of Persons, Rights, and the Moral Community.

How FEMA Fought the Future

Confessions of an emergency "planner"

By Jodie T. Allen

When a Federal Emergency Management Agency spokesman refused last June to release an agency memorandum refuting charges that FEMA was in league with aliens, it came as no surprise to conspiracists. To be sure, the charge had only the plot of a just-released movie (*The X-Files: Fight the Future*) as its basis, but such involvement would certainly be in character for a federal agency whose fleet of black helicopters is supposedly spotted all the time chasing UFOs in and out of caverns in Arizona.

After all, as Timothy McVeigh's erstwhile buddy, Michael Fortier, used to note in the flyers he handed out at the True Value hardware store in Kingman, FEMA is poised to run the country. At least it is once the United Nations has taken complete control and imposed its "New World Order" (you know, the one that the Trilateral Commission has long been developing in concert with the Council on Foreign Relations).

For a long time, FEMA cleverly hid its plans under a cover of incompetence. In the 1980s, for example, when Ronald Reagan revived the idea of fighting and winning a nuclear war with the Soviet Union, FEMA proposed to evacuate two-thirds of the population to rural areas—a plan that depended only upon the Soviets obligingly assuring us of a full week's notice before attacking. To raise morale among the dubious, the agency put out the good word that food should be no problem in the post-nuclear environment, inasmuch as livestock were far more likely to survive than people.

If called upon to respond to more-mundane threats—floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, and the like—the agency became famous for dealing slowly, incompetently, and even rudely with the disaster-struck communities seeking federal help.

Meanwhile, FEMA provided safe haven for out-of-work pols and other holders of political chits. When Bill Clinton first came to Washington wanting to do something nice for Raymond L. (Buddy) Young, the former head of his Arkansas security detail, he gave him a $92,300-a-year job as director of FEMA's regional office in Texas. And when Young—and later Clinton himself—phoned one of the Arkansas troopers who had been spilling tales of the president's dalliances to the *Los Angeles Times*, the trooper reportedly said that Clinton offered him a FEMA job too.

Finally, however, when the agency's stumblebum reputation grew so bad as actually to threaten its multibillion-dollar budget, FEMA decided it had better pay more attention to its cover mission. In recent years the agency has responded competently to a record number of natural disasters (a coincidence?). Meanwhile, using the 1993 World Trade Center bombing (and later the Oklahoma City bombing) as justification, the agency has beefed up its capability to deal with chemical weapons, biological agents, and other non-natural threats. As *The Washington Post* reported in April 1995, FEMA has held secret planning and training exercises in communities around the country, ostensibly in anticipation of further acts of foreign and domestic terrorism.

But the militia of cyberspace is not fooled. When FEMA announced an evacuation exercise in New Mexico two years ago, one Web site (www.iahushua.com/WOI/FEMA2.html) warned that should a real emergency be declared, "FEMA will...FORCE and escort ALL residents to 'safety zones.'...You will be required to leave your front door unlocked as you leave." And why would FEMA do that? "Folks might want to ask themselves one question, What is the only thing in the world that stands in the way of the full implementation of a worldwide socialistic central corporate government (NOW) and eliminating every trace of Sovereignty and Americanism in existence. OUR WEAPONS—OF COURSE....This is what they have been practicing for when all the

Black federal helicopters will soon swoop down and take Americans to concentration camps...
Yep.
...Run by a one-world government...
Yep.
...And over a dozen police officers tried to frame O.J. by dropping his blood all over the murder scene...
Get real.
I ♥ MILITIAS
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brain dead sheeple were telling us that we did not know what we were talking about."

Of course, most of us know better than that. Or do we?

In fact, FEMA and its predecessor agencies *have* been planning to take over the U.S. economy for many decades. I know. I was part of the planning effort.

Not many people remember, but FEMA has an ancestry of Pynchonesque intrigue and complexity. Its roots trace back to the World War II Office of Defense Mobilization, an Executive Office agency charged with galvanizing the resources of the civilian economy to support the crash war effort. Working with a small group of economists and operation researchers in the Defense Department and supportive think tanks, the ODM began to develop models of the U.S. economy that would facilitate its command and control in emergency situations.

After the war ended, the Eisenhower administration sent the Pentagon modelers packing based on the not-incorrect notion that their planning efforts smacked of socialism. But the ODM planners got a new lease on life through a merger with the Federal Civil Defense Administration, a ragtag agency newly charged with the impossible job of protecting the civilian population in the event of a nuclear exchange with the Soviet Union.

The resulting Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization suffered from an imperfect melding of its plebeian FCDA and more-aristocratic ODM ancestries. Nonetheless, aided by a physically massive (if, by modern standards, pitifully feeble) computer operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and housed in a "hardened" site under a Virginia mountain, OCDM set to work developing huge files on the country's industrial, agricultural, transportation, and communication resources. With the help of a venerable think tank, the National Planning Association, it also continued development of a huge time-phased input/output model of the U.S. economy that was meant to assist the government in reconstituting the civilian economy in the wake of a devastating nuclear attack.

First as an intern, then as a government employee, and later as a think tank researcher, I conspired on all aspects of this 1960s planning effort. Though it didn't occur to me much at the time, we were indeed planning to "take over" the country, in a manner of speaking. I can't say that we gave any thought to working with the U.N.—we were too busy coping with the simulated mess at home to worry about establishing any new world orders. Our intentions were ultimately benign. But we certainly did intend to make the trains—and much else—run according to our timetables. And our intentions might easily be misconstrued.

In fact, FEMA and its predecessor agencies *have* been planning to take over the U.S. economy for many decades. I know. I was part of the planning effort. Though it didn't occur to me much at the time, we were indeed planning to "take over" the country, in a manner of speaking.

One model component that I refined and programmed, for example, sought to maximize the growth rate of livestock herds until they reached a "level-off" magnitude sufficient to support a reasonably varied and nutritious diet for the surviving humans. (This was fairly easy in the event of a "counterforce" attack pattern in which the Soviets primarily targeted our own ICBMs and SAC bases, employing "air bursts" that maximized the radius of destruction but minimized secondary radioactive fallout spread. Far messier were "ground strike" patterns aimed at urban centers. These tended to leave bunches of slowly dying humans as well as livestock with which to contend.)

As it turned out, maximizing long-run herd growth did not consign the human population to short-run vegetarianism. In fact it required a fairly vigorous culling of young males. Only a small number of male animals are needed to service the females, and the rest not only consume a great deal of scarce feed but tend to engage in behavior disruptive to the harmonious functioning of the herd. (This holds true for all types of herds.) And while we never, ever once even considered applying the rule to reconstituting the human population, when you build models like that, who knows to what uses they might be applied by less scrupulous practitioners?

That we never got to try out our dirigiste models is surely no cause for regret by the larger population. In the 1970s, OCDM, having first been transferred to the Defense Department, was ultimately reconstituted as FEMA with a primarily nonnuclear emergency management mission. I do not know if our old models are still refined and maintained in working order by any remnant of FEMA or the Pentagon.

But OCDM's planning efforts were not totally without consequence. The networking weaknesses the planning efforts revealed provided justification for construction of the federal "defense highway" system begun during the Eisenhower administration. They also hastened the rerouting of long-distance telephone lines around major urban areas—and ultimately to the long-line system undergirding today's Internet. And as part of this and other defense planning efforts, contractors developed a host of technologies—video display terminals, electronic printers, remote data links, digitalized photography, innumerable computer design and programming techniques, etc.—that ultimately, if slowly, found their way into the civilian sector.

You may well find it preposterous (as I do) that FEMA aims to operate a secret government that will seize control of the country and its economy. But remember: It's not for lack of planning. ◆

Jodie T. Allen (jodiea@microsoft.com) is Washington editor of Slate *and a former editor of* The Washington Post*'s "Outlook" section.*

Test Anxiety

Why are environmentalists afraid of pesticide research?

By Michael Fumento

It's the Tuskegee syphilis experiment all over again! No, it's worse than that. It's the sort of research you'd expect from Josef Mengele!

Or so you might think based on a report that the Environmental Working Group (EWG) released at a July 27 press conference in Washington. The report documents the testing of various pesticides on human volunteers in England and Scotland beginning in the 1970s. The EWG, a tiny environmental group that nonetheless throws a long shadow, called for an immediate moratorium on such tests, demanding that the Environmental Protection Agency stop accepting them and stick to research with mice and rats. The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), which also participated in the press conference, concurred.

The EWG's report presented no evidence that any of the volunteers in the pesticide studies had been harmed. Furthermore, anyone who understands the science behind this controversy will recognize that the EWG and the NRDC are not simply concerned about the welfare of human subjects. Environmental activists know animal testing is highly inexact, and they like it that way, the better to advance their agenda of hamstringing evil corporations and farmers at every turn.

Because rodents are quite different from humans, current regulatory policy requires the use of "safety factors" that greatly reduce the amount of pesticide that can be sprayed on crops but may not actually enhance safety. Under rules the EPA implemented from the agency's inception, you first determine the minimum amount of pesticide required to make an animal sick, then reduce that dose slightly. This is called the "no-effect level," or NOEL. To allow for the possibility that humans are more sensitive to the chemical than the test animals are, you divide NOEL by 10. Then you divide by 10 again to allow for especially sensitive humans.

The more you divide, of course, the less pesticide farmers can use to protect their crops. And if a given level is already safe, by definition it's impossible to make it safer by allowing even less. But that didn't stop environmentalists from crying, "Let's divide again!" They got their wish two years ago, when Congress passed the Food Quality Protection Act of 1996. The law authorized the EPA, at its discretion, to use yet another tenfold "safety factor"—dividing NOEL by 1,000 instead of 100—to protect children.

The EPA'S new standard is so onerous that it will probably force farmers to replace many useful pesticides with products that are more costly and less effective. The rationale for the stricter standard is fuzzy, since children are already covered under the safety factor for "more sensitive" humans. Children also receive some coverage under the first safety factor, because animal testing often is done on infant or fetal rodents.

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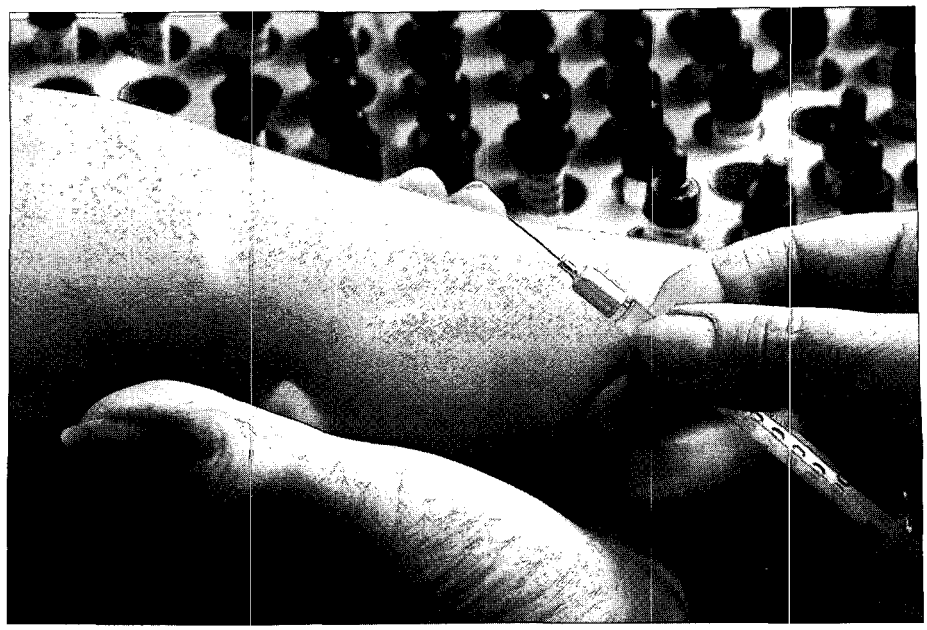
The environmentalists and the EPA know all this. So do the pesticide companies, which is what makes greater use of human testing so attractive to them: It could prove that the first tenfold safety factor, which assumes humans are much more sensitive than rodents, is needlessly strict. Such research obviously makes good economic sense for pesticide companies, farmers, food processors, and produce sellers. But it also makes good scientific sense, because human studies can tell us much more about safety than animal tests can.

Research with lab animals doesn't necessarily enable us to predict reactions in closely related species, let alone in humans. The furor over dioxin that continues to this day began when it was discovered that the tiniest amount knocked over guinea pigs like tenpins. But it took 5,000 times that dose to kill the same percentage of hamsters. Such experiences suggest that we should be careful about extrapolating from rodents to people.

I raised this issue at the EWG press conference. "Just as animals are better indicators than test tube experiments, aren't humans better indicators for human effects than animals?" I asked the group's vice president for research, Richard Wiles. "Absolutely," he conceded. This is precisely what disturbs the folks at the EWG. They've worked long and hard to get that third tenfold safety factor built into the law. If the pesticide companies manage to show that the first tenfold factor is unjustified, the environmentalists will be back at square one. Unable to attack the human testing on

scientific grounds, the EWG tried to do so on ethical grounds. "Allowing human experiments, such as those conducted recently in the United Kingdom, to serve as the basis for registering pesticides, is ethically indefensible," EWG President Ken Cook said in a press release. But when questioned at the press conference, Wiles had to admit there was no evidence of unethical treatment. The testing was unquestionably legal under British and U.S. laws. A spokesman for Britain's Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food said the tests "seemed to be along the right lines ethically." Medical ethics committees always review test protocols, and their decisions are reviewed every few years by international panels.



Under Their Skin: The Environmental Working Group's Richard Wiles has likened voluntary human-based pesticide trials to Nazi science experiments during World War II. Beyond such grotesque hyperbole lies contempt for the simple fact that pesticides make food safer.

The EWG made it sound as if England and Scotland were chosen for the pesticide research because their citizens are easily exploited, like those poor Indians who sell their kidneys. Last time I checked, though, the United Kingdom did not qualify as a Third World country. A spokesman for one of the pesticide companies, Rhone-Poulenc Agro, said its studies were done in the U.K. because they "were commissioned by our parent company" in Lyon, France. In any event, some pesticide research with human subjects has been conducted in the United States.

Indeed, the EPA conducted its own human test to determine skin absorption rates of the medfly killer malathion in the early 1990s. In 1987, what was then called Ciba-Geigy (now part of Novartis) recruited six managers to swallow the herbicide atrazine. They were no more exploited than they were foreign.

The EWG report nevertheless provided fodder for the sensationalist wing of the British press. "Human Lab Rats in Secret Toxic Tests," cried a headline in *The Birmingham Post.* It's true that most of the tests weren't publicized, but why would they be? When was the last time a negative rodent study made the news? ("Our lead story tonight: Researchers in the United Kingdom have found that a widely used pesticide is harmless to mice. We take you now to our correspondent in London.") In any case, at least one of the human pesticide studies *was* publicized.

In 1992, *Pesticide & Toxic Chemical News* published an article about a study conducted in Scotland by Rhone-Poulenc. I know because I found it in the Nexis database. Not exactly a secret. Volunteers for these studies are recruited and paid by labs set up for such testing, not the chemical companies themselves. They are divided into test subjects, who swallow orange juice or corn syrup containing the pesticide, and control subjects, who swallow the liquid without the chemical. The amounts of pesticide involved are so tiny that any reactions are expected to show up only in blood testing, not in any observable symptoms.

In one Rhone-Poulenc study, the chemical was aldicarb, an insecticide in the carbamate family. Carbamates work by inhibiting production of the enzyme cholinesterase, which is vital for nervous system functioning in humans as well as insects. The EPA had proposed cutting the maximum permissible amount of aldicarb residues on food to one-fifth the existing standard, which would cause great hardship for farmers who need more to keep insects at bay. Rhone-Poulenc thought that if it showed no symptoms at levels much greater than any possible real-world exposure, it could get the EPA to reconsider.

So in 1992, a British lab administered aldicarb in orange juice to 36 people at four dose levels, while 22 controls had a pesticide-free drink. According to Rhone-Poulenc spokesman Richard Rountree, the doses were set well below the no-effect level established in animal research. Even when the pesticide could be detected in the subjects' blood, none of them displayed any symptoms of aldicarb poisoning, which include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, blurred vision, muscular weakness, and difficult breathing. Rhone-Poulenc felt it had proven its point, but the EPA refused to budge on the stricter limit, noting that one of the test subjects had sweaty palms—which is *not* a symptom of aldicarb poisoning.

Apparently this episode was typical of how the EPA treats data from pesticide studies with human subjects. In response to the EWG's claim that "product registrations for [eight] insecticides rely on human studies," the agency insisted that "no human test data has been used by EPA for any final decision"—a point that an EWG spokeswoman later conceded. Last year, in a memo to its scientific advisory panel, the EPA indicated that human data would receive preference over animal data for some

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tests and that human testing is allowed under federal legislation.

The EWG's insinuation that subjects were exposed to grave danger was also unfounded. The symptoms reported in these studies—which included muscle weakness, headaches, and lightheadedness as well as sweaty palms—are all signs of nervousness. They are about what you would expect from people who believe they have ingested a poison, even if they are assured that the dose is too small to hurt them. The EPA's own evaluation of a study involving the insecticide dichlorvos noted that some subjects reported minor ailments such as headaches, drowsiness, and abdominal colic, but investigators "did not attribute these symptoms to dichlorvos administration."

Of course, human testing of pharmaceuticals is not only routine but required by law prior to FDA approval. "It's sad that companies are taking so much flak over these human pesticide studies because the whole object of these things is to try to identify a level that's absolutely safe," says Chris Wilkinson, a former EPA adviser and now an industry consultant in Arlington, Virginia. "Whereas with drugs, they try to see how much humans will tolerate. They really zap some people with these drugs."

But the EWG squirms around the drug testing, saying, "Exposure to toxic pollutants like pesticides is not undertaken on the assumption that in the future other people can benefit from exposure to the toxic substance." This is sophistry. People don't benefit from ingesting a pesticide, but they do benefit from its use.

Pesticides make food safer by preventing the growth of toxin-generating molds. They also make produce less expensive and more appealing—no small matter in a country where less than a tenth of the population consumes fruits and vegetables in the recommended amounts. Pesticide limits discourage the consumption of fresh produce by driving up its cost and making it look small, shriveled, and ugly (as "organic" crops generally do). Since more than 200 epidemiological studies have shown an association between low produce consumption and cancer risk, it seems likely that the anti-pesticide crusade is harming people's health rather than protecting it.

Although the EWG's report was nonsense from beginning to end, such documents have the power to intimidate. The day it appeared, the EPA proclaimed itself "deeply concerned that some pesticide manufacturers seem to be engaging in health-effects studies on human subjects as a way to avoid more protective results from animal tests." Why wasn't the EPA "deeply concerned" the day *before* the press conference? Because the suspicion that the agency takes its marching orders from environmental groups is largely correct. Why are animal tests "more protective" of humans than human tests? They're not; they're just more stringent. To a regulator, the tougher the law, the better.

Why wasn't the EPA "deeply concerned" about pesticide tests on humans the day *before* the press conference? Because the suspicion that the agency takes its marching orders from environmental groups is largely correct.

During the EWG press conference, I kept wondering if I would hear the *n*-word. Sure enough, just before the event ended Wiles said the pesticide studies were reminiscent of experiments conducted by the Germans during World War II. Dan Guttman, an ethicist on the panel, jumped to his feet and exclaimed, "Nobody's suggesting a comparison to the Nazis." To which the woman next to me quietly replied, "Well, *he* just did." ◆

Michael Fumento (mfumento@compuserve.com) is writing a handbook for health writers. His most recent book, The Fat of the Land: Our Health Crisis and How Overweight Americans Can Help Themselves, *has just been released in paperback by Penguin.*

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Gaseous Menace

The overblown regulatory anxiety over radon

By Kenneth Silber

Not since the original *Psycho* has there has been such intense concern about the dangers of showering. The Environmental Protection Agency is preparing to set limits on the presence of radon in household water to keep people from inhaling the radioactive gas as it evaporates from showers, washing machines, and dishwashers. This move could cost hundreds of millions of dollars annually in order to...well, actually, it's not clear if it would accomplish anything.

Welcome to the latest phase in the crusade against radon, an invisible, odorless, naturally occurring gas produced by the breakdown of the radioactive elements uranium and thorium, which are found in rocks and soil. Radon has stirred the anxieties of regulators and the public for much of the past two decades, especially because of accumulations of the gas in basements and other confined spaces. Millions of homeowners have had their houses tested for the substance, and many have installed vent pipes or taken other measures to reduce radon levels.

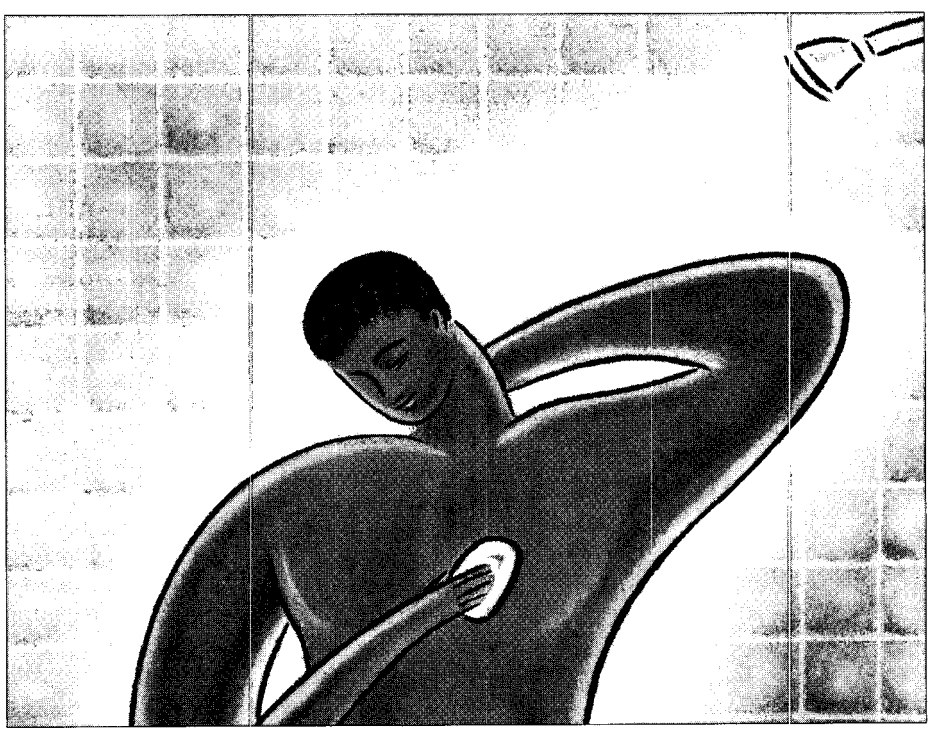
Not coincidentally, radon seeped into public awareness at much the same time that the nuclear power industry encountered serious opposition. By the mid-1980s, defenders of nuclear energy were asserting—quite correctly—that the public is exposed to much higher radiation levels from radon than from power plants. This argument did not have its intended effect. The industry "managed to get people afraid of radon rather than less concerned about nuclear power," says University of Maryland physicist Robert L. Park.

Radon is a known human carcinogen—that is, it is known to cause lung cancer among underground uranium miners who routinely inhale huge quantities of the stuff. Whether radon poses a danger to anyone else is unknown. Studies have failed to find any correlation between lung cancer and radon exposure in quantities encountered by the general public; to the contrary, lung cancer rates are relatively low in New England and the Rocky Mountain states—regions with notably high levels of radon. Some scientists have even speculated that, by stimulating the body's defense mechanisms, radon can help *prevent* lung cancer.

Nonetheless, the EPA and the federally funded National Academy of Sciences have produced some grim estimates about radon's impact on public health. (The EPA is required by law to consider NAS estimates in formulating its radon policies.) According to an NAS study released in February 1998, radon causes as many as 21,800 lung cancer deaths per year in the United States. This estimate, however, was not based on any actual cases of people getting cancer from radon in their homes; rather, it was produced by taking information on the group facing the highest risk from exposure to radon—uranium miners—and plugging it into a linear, no-threshold model of radiation's effects.

Such a model is "linear" because it assumes that radiation which is harmful to health at high concentrations must be proportionately harmful at lowest levels of exposure. It also assumes there is no level ("threshold") at which radiation is harmless. Those assumptions have been called into question, due in part to epidemiological data showing that groups exposed to low levels of radiation (such as Navy shipyard workers) have cancer rates no higher than the general public. A growing understanding of molecular biology helps explain such resilience: While radiation can damage DNA (and thus cause cancer), various enzymes are constantly working to *repair* DNA.

There is, then, plenty of reason to doubt that radon kills tens of thousands of people each year, or indeed that it kills



Hitting the Showers: The EPA is preparing to set limits on waterborne radon, a move that may cost hundreds of millions of dollars while providing no health benefits.

anyone other than uranium miners (and even there, the statistics are complicated by the fact that many miners are smokers). Yet the EPA is embarking on a costly expansion of its war against radon, which is hard to justify even if radon is as dangerous as the agency contends.

Under the 1996 Safe Drinking Water Act, the EPA is authorized to establish a "maximum contaminant level" for waterborne radon, even though water—whether ingested directly or inhaled after evaporation—is a marginal source of radon.

This provision, backed by environmental groups such as the Natural Resources Defense Council, is reminiscent of the proverbial drunk who searches for his keys under a lamp rather than in the darkness where he lost them. Water—whether ingested directly or inhaled through evaporation—is a marginal source of radon; but it is a source that lends itself to control by regulations imposed on utilities. "The predominant risk from radon is from inhalation," says Dan W. Pedersen, a regulatory engineer at the American Water Works Association, an industry group that includes some 4,000 utilities. "The predominant source of radon for inhalation is actually air seeping from the ground into the house."

A 1994 EPA report estimated that waterborne radon causes 192 deaths per year, or almost 1 percent of radon's alleged death toll. In September 1998, the NAS placed the figure at 180, of which only 20 are stomach cancer cases attributed to drinking radon; the remainder result from inhaling evaporated water, particularly in showers and other areas where water is heated or agitated. (Ingesting radon is acknowledged to be less dangerous than inhaling it. Radon's radioactivity consists of alpha particles, which are generally unable to pass through the stomach's lining but may lodge in the lungs.)

Of course, the above estimates could be wrong. If the linear, no-threshold hypothesis is mistaken, then the death toll from waterborne radon might be zero (or even a negative number, if radon exposure actually prevents some fatalities).

But if waterborne radon does kill nearly 200 people a year, what should be done? Water purification plants can remove radon by spraying their water through the air before sending it to customers. Unfortunately, such aeration is an expensive and potentially risky process. Sprayed water is more likely to come into contact with airborne viruses and bacteria and then must be disinfected with chlorine. The water also must be pretreated to prevent impurities from oxidation that can damage pipes and equipment.

In its 1994 report, the EPA estimated that preventing 84 of the putative 192 annual cancer deaths caused by waterborne radon would cost $272 million per year. The American Water Works Association put the annual cost at $2.5 billion. The industry group says the EPA did not adequately account for the cost of additional water treatment.

Moreover, all these figures were based on a never-enacted 1991 EPA proposal to limit waterborne radon. Even though there is no limit on waterborne radon, the Safe Drinking Water Act may empower the EPA to set an even more-stringent standard than the one proposed in 1991. (The level will not be announced until mid-1999.) In any event, the costs will be borne mainly by smaller communities: Gas evaporates more slowly from wells than from rivers or reservoirs, and the high fixed cost of filtration makes water treatment an expensive process for utilities that serve a small number of customers.

Despite its name, the Safe Drinking Water Act is not only about water. Under a complicated provision, if the EPA sets its waterborne radon maximum below a certain level, then the states are allowed to propose "multimedia radon mitigation programs" that address air quality *and* household water; new regulations may be placed on airborne radon even if the gas didn't originate from evaporated water. This approach may seem sensible, since it's often cheaper to install ventilation systems than it is to treat water. But the result would give regulators more control over radon reduction measures that have until now been mostly voluntary. For instance, many homeowners conduct radon testing or remediation in accordance with EPA *guidelines*; increasingly, they may be taking such measures because of EPA *rules*.

This is where things stand in the war against radon: To combat minor or nonexistent health risks, the federal government will impose a set of costly, extensive, and possibly dangerous new regulations on the water you drink and the air you breathe. Taking a shower may never again be such a relaxing experience.

To combat minor or nonexistent health risks, the federal government will impose a set of costly, extensive, and possibly dangerous new regulations on the water you drink and the air you breathe.

Kenneth Silber (ksilberny@aol.com) writes about science, technology, and economics.

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Dial "O" for Outrage

Tales from *The Excuse Factory*'s cutting-room floor

By Walter Olson

One of the less friendly reviews of my book *The Excuse Factory* came from a leftish law professor who accused me of spending too much time on unusual cases from the frontiers of employment law, and further complained that I kept recounting such cases in "tones of incredulity."

I'm sorry. I've tried, I really have, but I just can't repress those tones of incredulity. In fact I wish I could have included even more of the bizarre cases I kept running into while researching the book.

For instance, I regret that there wasn't room to tell about the Oregon woman who sued after co-workers kept leaving rubber spiders on her desk. A jury voted her a large award, most of which was later thrown out when an appeals court ruled that she had failed to establish that she "was terminated for resisting harassment relating to her spider phobia."

Nor was there space to discuss what happened after the University of Connecticut's athletics department was accused of wrongfully insisting on petiteness in its cheerleading squad, thus violating the rights of plumper pom-pom wavers. Yielding to the legal pressure, school authorities announced plans to abandon a popular "human toss" routine and decreed that pyramid formations would henceforth be limited to two levels high.

And with the book approaching 400 pages, I likewise had to omit any mention of the job applicant who filed an official complaint after being turned down on medical grounds. "I have a microchip embedded in one of my molars," explained the complainant, which "speaks to me and others." "You have to remember," said a spokeswoman for the local human rights agency about the decision to launch an investigation, "what's crazy to you might not be crazy to someone else." (The case actually did make history in its way: The late columnist Mike Royko made such merciless fun of it that the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission dropped its practice of insisting that every bias complaint be investigated, however dubious.)

With the pundit class stuck on Monica, Monica, Monica 'round the clock, this is hardly the time to attempt a serious column, so let's head down to the archives for a tour of a few cases that got away.

Some lawsuits fascinated me, though I was never sure what point they proved or which side I favored. New York law instructed local police forces to give preference to recruits in their 20s—they're physically fitter and likelier to stay on duty long enough to justify their training costs. A court knocked down that policy as inconsistent with the (then) state of federal age-discrimination law, with the result that it became unlawful for local governments to turn away middle-aged rookies. There was a twist, however: The Age Discrimination in Employment Act protects only workers who've reached their 40th birthday. This left John Doyle and numerous other applicants hanging: They were too old for Suffolk County's 29-year-old cutoff, but too young to invoke the ADEA.

Inconsistent? Maybe, but not to worry, said the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit, ruling that the county could lawfully turn away Doyle himself even as it was being forced to accept older applicants who—both the county and Doyle agreed—were less suitable recruits than he was. After all, the court pointed out, the county's wish to favor younger applicants was wholly rational, even if, thanks to the ADEA, it was no longer allowed to *act* on that rational wish with respect to a wide sector of the work force. And Doyle's consolation was the knowledge that he could mark time in some less desired job until he turned 40, at which point—though he'd be less fit and several years closer to pensionability—the county would presumably have to hire him as a cop after all.

Other cases I discarded on grounds of overkill or redundancy. To establish the proposition that some civil servants are so well dug into their jobs that even convicting them of crimes isn't enough to get them out, I felt one real-life example would suffice, and used the one about the New York City teacher convicted of selling drugs (from his school office, according to the authorities) who kept drawing his salary even while he served time upstate in prison. That meant omitting cases like that of the Minneapolis cop who, thanks to a civil service commission's ruling in his favor, stayed at his beat by day even as he served nights in a nearby Wisconsin jail; the well-placed official found to be still at his desk at the U.S. State Department two years after getting convicted of attempted extortion; and the two prominent District of Columbia officials who wouldn't give up their jobs in the housing department despite felony convictions on bribe-taking charges: "All civil avenues open to her will be explored in contesting her termination," said the attorney for one of them.

There wasn't room for a proper chapter tracing the effects of OSHA and similar workplace-safety agencies, so there went the lovely vignette, lifted from Dan Seligman's much-missed "Keeping Up" column in *Fortune*, about how regulation has gradually suppressed the one-man "backyard" mines that used to be found in mountain areas. "Twice a month I was to search myself for cigarettes and matches before I entered the mine," said Ralph Bloom, who finally closed his all-by-his-lonesome coal operation after 37 years. "Then I was supposed to check in and check out, so I'd know if I was in or out of the mine."

And with only the briefest space in which to explain the principle of legal entitlement to dollars for workplace stress—say, the stress of being yelled at by a supervisor for muffing one's job—there was no time to explore some of the more imaginative exploiters of the trend. These

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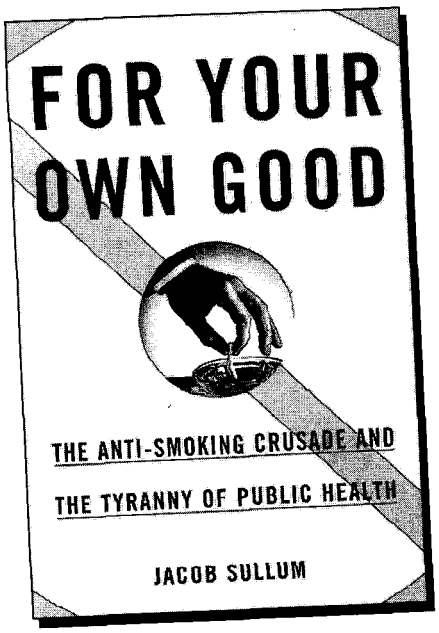

In ***For Your Own Good***, award-winning journalist Jacob Sullum examines the major themes of the anti-smoking movement, showing that tobacco's contemporary opponents echo complaints first expressed centuries ago. Today, under the banner of "public health," they say the government has a right and an obligation to eliminate tobacco consumption once and for all. Sullum argues that such a use of state power is illegitimate and dangerous, threatening the freedom of anyone who dares to trade longevity for pleasure.

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—Florence King, *National Review* columnist

"A superb new book by Jacob Sullum, who dispassionately demolishes anti-smoking arguments (including the one about addiction)."

—James K. Glassman, *The New York Post*

"A readable, well-reported account of the near-triumph of anti-smoking zealots in America...After reading *For Your Own Good*, I'm all the more fearful we're on a slippery slope toward more government instrusion."

—Fred Barnes, *The Weekly Standard*

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include the various cops who've filed for disability based on the stress they incurred by *committing* brutal beatings or other misconduct and the wealthy California physician who collected disability checks from his prison cell to cover the stress of being jailed (his reasoning being that the imprisonment—for his role in an $8 million insurance scam—had after all arisen in the course of his professional activities).

Like the Balkans, whose tragedy is said to be that they produce more history than can be consumed locally, some cities and states seem to generate more noteworthy cases than are needed to entertain their own local talk-show audiences. Philadelphia, long famous for civil service excesses, took 10 years to shed a school employee who was late to work nearly every day, and who'd spent the entire period under (remarkably unsuccessful) psychiatric care aimed at remedying his "neurotic compulsion for lateness." On the other hand, the city failed to dismiss (though it did succeed in transferring to a less-demanding agency) an employee whose chronic absences over years were occasioned by his habit of going off to play pinball and video games. The union argued in its grievance that his fondness for the arcades counted as a gambling addiction and was thus a protected handicap.

Then there's Massachusetts, where, according to Howie Carr in the *Boston Herald*, the state Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) is known for the openhandedness with which it dispenses emotional-distress awards to those who've suffered workplace setbacks and upsets: $15,000 in emotionals to a seven-months-pregnant woman who got turned down for a job as a bartender; $20,000 against a company that declined to hire as an auto mechanic a man who was legally blind when not wearing glasses and who had no driver's license; $25,000 to a would-be policeman who was completely deaf in one ear; $25,000 to a female cop left at the station while huskier male colleagues were sent on a drug raid; and so forth.

MCAD complainants often lay claim to extreme psychic distress even in cases where you'd think a certain amount of roll-with-the-punches mental stoicism would be a prerequisite for the jobs they were after. For example, after being turned down for a police job in the town of Salem, Charles Brown was awarded $100,000 in emotionals after testifying that he burst into tears when he so much as saw a cop on the street—leaving townspeople to wonder how he might react if some bad guy were actually to shoot at him. Though an attorney for the town complained that he'd never sought counseling and offered no medical evidence for his claims, Brown's attorney said his word should be enough: "He explained the distress he suffered, and it was real."

A law signed by Bill Clinton exposed to litigators' probes the sexual history of men accused of harassment, thus ensuring that a claim of unconsenting crudity (in the *Jones* case) could cast a relevance net wide enough to reach the president's consensual relationship with Monica Lewinsky.

"The rest of my life," Errol Flynn is supposed to have said as he entered his final decline, "will be devoted to women and litigation," a sentiment that brings us back to Bill Clinton and Zippergate. It seems hard to imagine that just a year or two ago, before the Lewinsky affair brought the standards of public discussion down with such a thump, it still seemed too crude or undignified to air the details of such harassment disputes as *Priest v. Rotary* (Northern District of California, 1986: "exposed his undershorts which were covered with red hearts") or *Jones v. Flagship International* (5th Circuit, 1986: caterer's ice sculpture of blouseless mermaid), cases that I suppose these days they're dramatizing on Nickelodeon.

The fact remains that Bill Clinton's lawyers would have had a better idea of what to expect from the Employment Lawsuit That Ate Washington if they'd skipped the dull theoretical treatises purporting to prove the rationality of America's litigation system and instead read through a pile of horror stories. For a model of what happens when lawyers are invited to probe for wider and wider evidence of wrongdoing, check out *Cooley v. Carmike Cinemas*, which reached a Tennessee federal court in 1994. Cooley, an older manager fired from a movie theater chain, had some pretty decent evidence to back up his claim of age discrimination. But just as the law fatefully defines as relevant to Paula Jones's case President Clinton's relations with all other women not his wife, so the court permitted Cooley's lawyers to start compiling a rather adventuresome dossier of the thoughts and sayings and deeds of the company's brash, 44-year-old CEO, Michael Patrick—all aimed at showing that Patrick was a bad actor when it came to the elderly, any elderly.

Duly admitted into evidence, for instance, were allegations that Patrick had once expressed fears that his sexual performance would decline as he got older (evidence, no doubt, of a propensity toward stereotyping), that he'd once complained about having to spend Thanksgiving Day with his grandmother ("I don't like to be around old people"), and that back in 1968—at the age of 18!—he'd gone to see the movie *Wild in the Streets* and commented, "Yeah, I believe that. Everybody over 30 years old needs to be put in a pen." Helpfully, the court opinion footnoted Leonard Maltin's *TV Movies and Video Guide* ("dark satire about [a] millionaire singing idol/drug pusher who is elected President after [the] voting age is lowered to 14"). It seemingly dismissed the possibility that Patrick might have reconsidered his views in the more than two decades since he'd delivered the flip remark—especially since he'd long since turned 30 himself.

In approving Cooley's $500,000 verdict, the 6th Circuit declared that such remarks "help to reveal [Patrick's] state of mind and reflect a deep-rooted, ongoing pattern"—much as Congress (in a law signed by Bill Clinton, no less) yielded to feminists' demands and agreed to expose to litigators' probes the broad sexual history of men accused of harassment, thus ensuring that a claim of unconsenting crudity (in the *Jones* case) could cast a relevance net wide enough to reach the president's entirely consensual relations with Monica Lewinsky, thus allowing the Jones lawyers to force him into a perjury trap.

For pretty much their whole careers, Bill and Hillary Clinton have hung out with the kind of crowd that tends to admire litigation as a wonderful engine of social progress and dismisses resistance and public outrage as a matter of mere "horror stories." Do you think they'll change their views now that it's happened to them?

Contributing Editor Walter Olson (hambo @mags.net) is a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute and the author of The Excuse Factory: How Employment Law Is Paralyzing the American Workplace *(The Free Press).*

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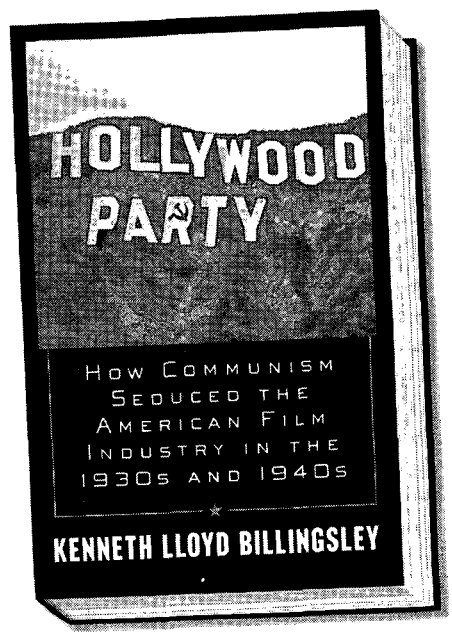

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Hope Springs Paternal

What medical reporters think inquiring minds don't need to know

By Thomas W. Hazlett

On May 3, 1998, readers of *The New York Times* were treated to an amazing front-page story by science writer Gina Kolata, "Hope in the Lab: A Cautious Awe Greets Drugs that Eradicate Tumors in Mice." It began, "Within a year, if all goes well, the first cancer patient will be injected with two new drugs that can eradicate any type of cancer, with no obvious side effects and no drug resistance—in mice.

"Some cancer researchers say the drugs are the most exciting treatment that they have ever seen. But then they temper their enthusiasm with caution, noting that the history of cancer treatments is full of high expectations followed by dashed hopes when drugs with remarkable effects in animals are tested in people."

The story ignited the vaunted media frenzy. But was this flame of interest sparked by the tremendous scientific breakthrough? A celebration for the sick? The need to speed such promising developments to market? No. Just about every enlightened quarter of the press offered its own analysis of Kolata's story—and trashed it. Not for its presentation of the medical facts, but for its audacity in putting such good news on the front page. This, the conventional wisdom held, cruelly subjected cancer victims to spasms of "false hope."

Take it from the new conscience of American media, *Brill's Content*: "Kolata did get the science right....And Kolata made it clear that the drugs had been successful thus far only in rodents. But that caveat was lost amid the article's optimism and its placement." Scientific progress is fine when given an indecipherable blurb back on page D-74, or tucked away in obscure professional journals. But putting that stuff on the newsstand for all to see?

The esteemed Bernard Kalb, host of CNN's *Reliable Sources*, feared that Kolata had put out the news too quickly. "Did the *Times* and the pursuing media get ahead of the science," he fretted, "provoking false hope for cancer patients and their families?" This was the concern of CNN's medical correspondent Steve Salvatore, who suggested the real problem is "the mentality and the mindset of the cancer patient. ...Put [that research] in the hands of a person who is desperate, who's been told that they have cancer spread throughout their body, they have six months to live. None of the latest treatments are going to help them. Their family's upset, they're upset, and they're grasping at straws. You put this article in front of them, they're going to be hopeful."

How mean-spirited can one reporter be? Better to hide this stuff in a safe place so those pesky *terminal* cancer patients won't be getting all excited, calling their doctors and asking obnoxious questions. Otherwise, these folks are apt to be stricken with "False Hope Syndrome," a condition which leads people to act as if they have a chance of surviving when any responsible person would just lie down, take his chemotherapy, pull out his hair, puke up his innards, and fade off into the statistically bleak horizon.

Indeed, some think the dread disease of unwarranted optimism is a killer. Take ABC's medical editor, Dr. Tim Johnson, who agonizes over how much information the little people can handle. "There is a large part of me which says my most important responsibility is to keep thing.. off the air," he said.

Keep that in mind during the next ABC medical update. You'll be enjoying the luxury of knowing that your reporter is delivering all the news he thinks you can handle. Most important, he'll be filtering out any potentially dangerous germs which could touch off a bout of the dreaded "false hope."

But who will protect you from that vastly underreported—and infinitely more lethal—syndrome, "false despair"? I do not know if the gatekeepers of scientific knowledge have bothered to quantify the costs and benefits of hope, but I'd be interested to see the balance sheet. By its very nature, hope implies a statistical chance; one cannot claim to be "hopeful" and yet fail to understand that failure is a potential outcome. To remain hopeful in the face of such grim possibilities is to claim at least a moral victory over death and defeatism.

Cancer patients are often said to be "terminal," but some bright thinkers have asked: Who among us is not? In electing to be hopeful, and taking all reasonable measures to get well, those ailing bodies who resolutely search for the best medicine do nothing but make life better. Maybe optimism is itself a partial cure; great healers like Yale's heroically hopeful Dr. Bernie Siegel think so. In any case, what is the downside? Too many phone calls to the receptionist at the oncology clinic? Too many requests for *Science* reprints at the public library? Too upbeat an attitude when fighting the good fight?

Great advances are being made in many disparate branches of cancer research, and much of the progress rests with cheerful souls who smile when they read what Kolata writes, eagerly volunteering for the clinical trials that will decide the issue. More interest should accompany their brave efforts—more funding for research, more investment in the pharmaceutical firms that sponsor trials, more publicity for signs of life in the battle against the most brutal murderer of our friends and loved ones. That accurate reporting on the marvels of science should become a cause for elitists pushing self-censorship is itself a stunning reminder of the life-giving benefits of the public's right to know.

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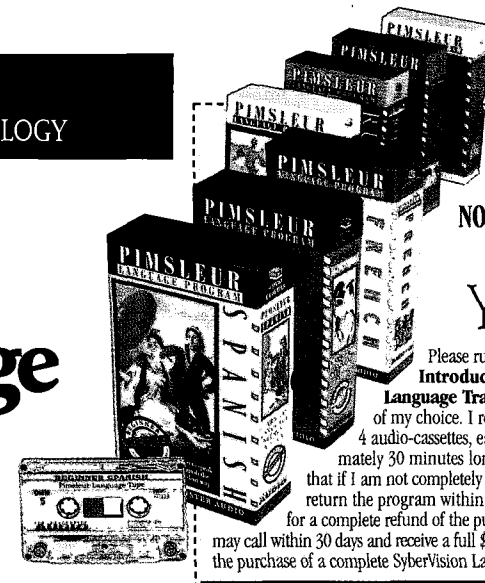

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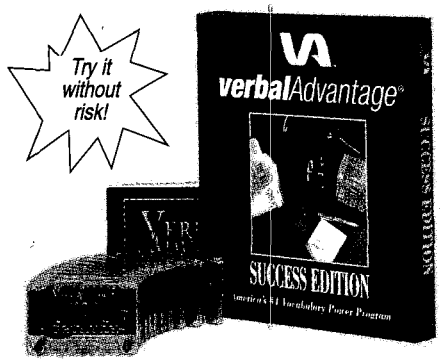

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